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Reimagining Hosios Loukas

The Monastery as Landscape

JUSTIN A. MANN

The monastery of Hosios Loukas stands upon Mount Helicon in central Greece as an eternal memorial to its patron saint, Hosios Loukas of Steiris (Fig. 1). The monastery's architectural body, its *katholikon* (abbey church), bears the hallmarks of skilled craftsmen, and the glittering mosaic program gives voice to stories of the biblical past and the Byzantine present.¹ Feelings of an all-powerful and immortal presence impress upon the viewer's senses, while also establishing order between the mortal realm below and a holy dominion above.² For much of the history of modern Byzantine studies, the *katholikon* takes center stage as the primary medium through which

the monastery was seen, experienced, and defined, mainly in response to the material and experiential qualities defined above. Therefore, the Byzantine monastery, including Hosios Loukas, is commonly defined by standing structures and surviving texts; in other words, the *katholikon* and the artistic works within *are* the monastery. However, is the *katholikon* the sole defining feature of a monastery and, importantly, of the community's identity and place in the Byzantine world? Or is the *katholikon* one part, albeit significant, of a more comprehensive image of monastic activity and identity?

The image of the monastery differs significantly from the modern view described above when vignettes of long-ago visits to Byzantine monasteries survive. For example, when Vasilij Grigorovich Barskij, an eighteenth-century Ukrainian monk, visited and illustrated Hosios Loukas, his image of the monastery extended far beyond the *katholikon* (Fig. 2).³ In Barskij's representation of Hosios Loukas, one finds scenes that pull monastic life far away from the glittering halls of the nave and into a broader social and natural environment. Movement and interaction dictate his illustration, wherein there are monks tending gardens outside the enclosure walls, monks using nearby paths, and monastic structures

1 The monastery of Hosios Loukas has seen a significant bibliography of scholarly works develop in the last century. For a general bibliography, see C. Bouras, *The Architecture of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas* (Athens, 2018), which is the English translation of Bouras's original book published in Greek as C. Bouras, *Η αρχιτεκτονική της Μονής του Οσίου Λουκά* (Athens, 2015). Bouras's work builds significantly upon R. W. Schultz and S. H. Barnsley, *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris, in Phocis, and the Dependent Monastery of Saint Nicolas in the Fields, Near Skripou, in Bæotia* (London, 1901). Relating specifically to the British School at Athens's early interest in Hosios Loukas, see A. G. Kakissis, "The Byzantine Research Fund Archive: Encounters of Arts and Crafts Architects in Byzantium," in *Scholars, Travels, Archives: Greek History and Culture through the British School at Athens*, ed. M. L. Smith, P. M. Kitromilides, and E. Calligas (London, 2009), 125–44.

2 S. Ćurčić, "The Church as a Symbol of the Cosmos in Byzantine Architecture and Art," in *Heaven & Earth*, vol. 1, *Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, ed. A. Drandaki, D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and A. Tourta (Athens, 2013), 102–8.

3 See discussion and bibliography in V. della Dora, "Light and Sight: Vasilij Grigorovich Barskij, Mount Athos and the Geographies of Eighteenth-Century Russian Orthodox Enlightenment," *Journal of Historical Geography* 53 (2016): 86–103.



Fig. 1. Hosios Loukas katholikon, looking northeast. Photo by author.

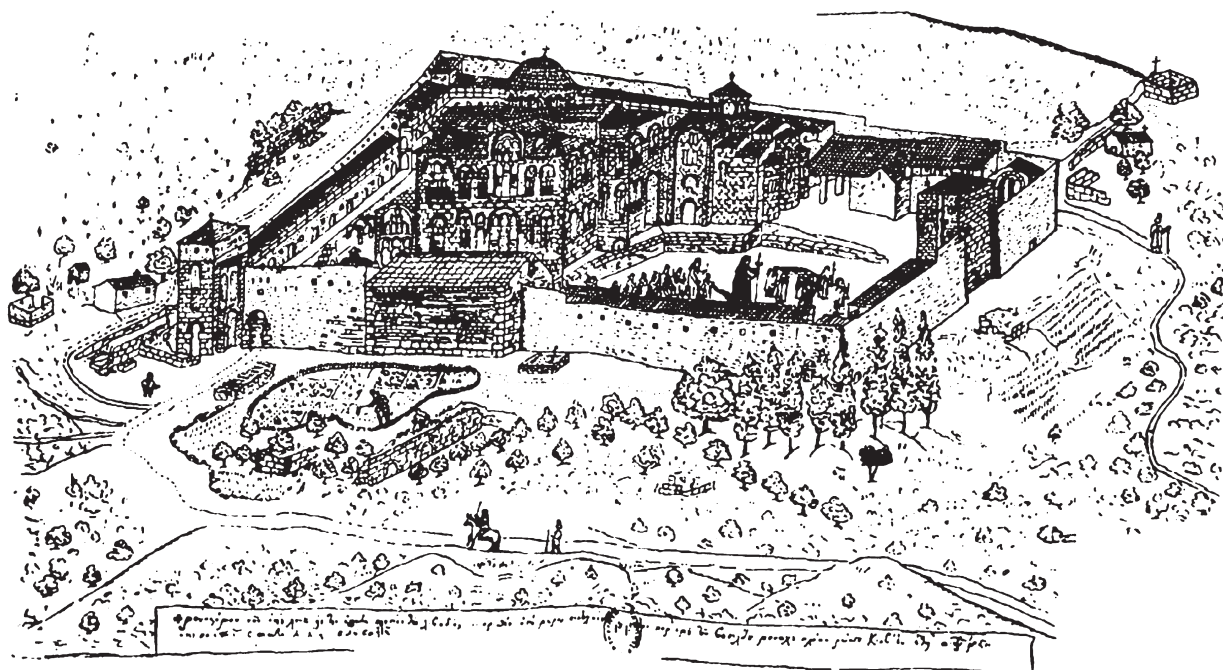


Fig. 2. Hosios Loukas, 1743. Drawing by Vasilij Grigorovich Barskij; photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

marking the landscape at important junctures. Barskij even depicted himself outside the monastery on a nearby road. Thus, what he saw and chose to depict was a monastery that was not only a church—or a collection of core buildings—but also a monastery that expressed its identity through a complex cultural landscape that it participated in building, that being a monastic landscape.⁴ As a cultural entity, the monastic landscape coalesced the monastery's relationships with all other human and nonhuman actors, binding them together with a focus on a specific community.⁵ The monastic landscape was also the primary setting that mediated the human experience of monasticism. Experiences of monastic authority and sanctity were partly manifested through different material markers and ritual practices underpinned by a complex network of relationships that comprised the monastic landscape.

The primary goal of the present article is the definition of this distinctly monastic landscape and the reimagining of the monastery of Hosios Loukas as a composite of the built environment, natural topography, and communal memory. By complementing and building on a wealth of past research on Hosios Loukas and Byzantine monasticism, three specific research goals drive this reexamination and reimagining of the monastery as a socio-environmental composite. First, the study aims to integrate local topography into the discussion of monastic experience and monastic identity. The life of a Byzantine saint was rarely, if ever, confined behind the walls of a church; instead, the saint's life and miracles were intimately tied to the people, communities, and topographies that surrounded them.⁶ Second, the case study of Hosios Loukas demonstrates that ritualistic movement, particularly the act of pilgrimage, was vital in the creation of

monastic landscapes and identities. Such ritual movement allowed the monastery to harness the power of a shared cultural memory embedded in the landscape. It brought forth the monastic landscape as a liminal space, bonding monks, the laity, and pilgrims to a shared identity fixed in the memory of a specific saint. Third, by focusing research on the monastery's "outside" spaces, the Byzantine monastery will be better positioned for cross-cultural and comparative study with other cultures, with a greater focus on points of variability. As Adam T. Smith has stated, "It is the points of variability that are the very things comparative study should bring out if we are to develop a truly anthropological vision of early social life."⁷ It is hoped that emphasizing these points of variability will invite scholars within and beyond the bounds of Byzantium to study further how monasticism contributed to the construction of past social structures, human-environmental interaction and cooperation, and the embedding of shared memory in the natural landscape.

The methods used to illuminate the monastic landscape of Hosios Loukas are primarily anthropological, drawing heavily from past phenomenological and practice theory studies of cultural landscapes and material identities; in addition to the anthropological tenor of the present work, it is equally an archaeological study focused on movement and memory.⁸ But it is important

4 See also the drawing of Simonopetra by Barskij for another example of the monk's view of the monastery as an entity that extended beyond the katholikon, in della Dora, "Light and Sight," 99, fig. 6.

5 See below, n. 24.

6 Monasteries often oversaw the transformation of landscapes by imbuing their identity into the environment and by raising architectural markers in essential locations; thereby, caves became sanctified with a holy presence, springs became sites of miraculous healing, fields became economically productive, and mountains became ladders to heaven. For example, see F. Kondyli and S. Craft, "The Making of a Byzantine Monastic Landscape: A Case Study from the Mazi Plain in Northwest Attica, Greece," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 33.2 (2021): 135–59.

7 A. T. Smith, *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Polities* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), 273.

8 For past studies, see C. Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths, and Monuments* (Oxford, 1994); W. Ashmore and A. B. Knapp, eds., *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives* (Malden, MA, 1999); E. C. Casella and C. Fowler, eds., *The Archaeology of Plural and Changing Identities: Beyond Identification* (New York, 2005); M. Given, "Commotion, Collaboration, Conviviality: Mediterranean Survey and the Interpretation of Landscape," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 26.1 (2013): 3–26; M. Given et al., *Landscape and Interaction: The Troodos Archaeological and Environmental Survey Project*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2013); D. L. Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt: An Archaeological Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 2017); and F. Kondyli, *Rural Communities in Late Byzantium: Resilience and Vulnerability in the Northern Aegean* (Cambridge, 2022). For an overview of theories relating to mobility, movement, and landscape, see B. Farnell, "Moving Bodies, Acting Selves," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999): 341–73; and J. E. Snead, C. L. Erickson, and J. A. Darling, "Making Human Space: The Archaeology of Trails, Paths, and Roads," in *Landscapes of Movement: Trails, Paths, and Roads in Anthropological Perspective*, ed. J. E. Snead, C. L. Erickson, and J. A. Darling (Philadelphia, 2009), 1–19.



Fig. 3. Sakis Kostopoulos on survey overlooking Hosios Loukas. Photo by author.

to temper the reader's expectations in this regard. The archaeological focus is primarily on a reconnaissance survey carried out between 2018 and 2023 that recorded spatial, GPS, and photographic data (Fig. 3).⁹ The survey aimed to bring about an equilibrium between the core of the monastery and its outlying parts that occupy strategic points in the monastery's topographical setting. Therefore, the reader will not find an in-depth discussion of trench reports, distribution patterns, or typological discussions that are commonplace in other archaeological studies. Instead, the focus is on interpreting the relationships the monastery entered into with the natural topography and the human experiences that resulted from these relationships.

9 Hosios Loukas was one part of a more extensive study that considered the wider monastic landscapes of Byzantine Hellas; see J. A. Mann, "Between Authority and Sanctity: The Monastic Landscapes of Middle Byzantine Hellas" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2022).

The present article thus presents the monastic landscape of Hosios Loukas in three parts. The first part addresses the natural environment and the topographic relationships of Hosios Loukas's monastic landscape. The second focuses on the built environment and the relationships, experiences, and memories contained and maintained within the walls of the *katholikon*, as well as the monastery's outlying chapels, *metochia* (monastic dependencies), and towers. The final section addresses movement and relationships of mobility expressed through the ritual act of pilgrimage. While a complete picture of the monastic landscape is impossible due to the passage of time, these three short vignettes reinforce the core thesis of this article: Hosios Loukas—and, by extension, the Byzantine monastery writ large—was not just an architectural body within which lived an isolated community of monks; instead, the monastery was its landscape, a community upheld and reified by the relationships it maintained with its natural environment, a shared communal memory, and other social groups.

The Topographical Life of Hosios Loukas

The present section takes on the task of explicating the intersection between environment, identity, and memory in monastic *spaces* and *places*.¹⁰ Evidence is marshaled to elucidate the human-environmental relationships and experiences in specific *places*, and that aided in the construction of a specifically monastic identity and distinctly monastic landscape. For example, a small chapel was simultaneously a place of local worship, a marker of ownership over the landscape, an organizational tool for movement and time, and a bastion of spiritual defense. As the reader will encounter in the subsequent sections, such an approach to the study of Byzantine monasticism reveals that Hosios Loukas was a community fixated on physical access to the sea and memorial control over the natural environment, but equally important it also helps build the framework for a comparative approach to studying monastic spaces and communities. Textual studies have often relied on comparative readings to better understand monastic practices and beliefs, and it is high time to apply such comparative methods to the archaeological and environmental study of Byzantine monasticism.¹¹

The history of the grand architectural memorial to the life of Hosios Loukas is rooted in the deeds of

its eponymous founder in the first half of the tenth century.¹² The late ninth and early tenth centuries were a tumultuous time in the history of Byzantine Hellas. The thema (administrative district) of Hellas was only fully reintegrated into Byzantium's administrative and social structures in the early ninth century,¹³ and despite Byzantium's resurgent presence, the region remained beset by war and danger, especially from the armies of Bulgaria to the north and the threat of Arab raiders based on the island of Crete to the south.¹⁴ Loukas himself was born sometime around the turn of the tenth century and was a quintessential product of these uncertain times.¹⁵ After several years of finding his monastic footing, Loukas founded his enduring community on Mount Helicon, near the village of Steiris, around the year 946 (Fig. 4).¹⁶ A large following built up around Loukas during this time, celebrating his role as a spiritual guide and a holy healer. His fame grew to greater heights with a prophecy that the island of Crete

12 The only direct historical information about the early days of Hosios Loukas comes from the saint's vita, mostly predating the monastery's built environment. The vita's author is unknown, though specific factual references and omissions suggest it was written in the second half of the tenth century, perhaps shortly after the saint's death in 953, as suggested in C. L. Connor and W. R. Connor, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris* (Brookline, MA, 1994), xiii. English translations will be drawn from Connor and Connor, *Life and Miracles*, which will henceforth be cited as *v. H. L.* when referring to the *vita of Hosios Loukas* itself, along with the corresponding page number with English text cited as (trans. C. C.).

13 For an overview of the administrative structure of Byzantine Hellas and imperial attitudes toward the governance of the provinces during the time of the monastery's foundation, see L. Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950–1100* (Cambridge, 2004).

14 Loukas's early monastic life resembles the perils of his parents' experience as refugees constantly on the move. Loukas is faced with near death and Hollywood-like escapes from raiders of Arab and Bulgarian origin. Of particular note is his early life along the coast of the Gulf of Corinth at Mount Ioannitza and Kalamion. For example, one reads that "the villagers who were gathered around the man of God crossed over to neighboring islands, but envy, preceding them, brought an unexpected danger upon them. For when they thought they were safe [living upon Mount Ioannitza], living securely in their righteousness, the Bulgarians suddenly attacked them in a ship which they had stolen and killed almost all of them [Loukas's community]; only a few of them, including the great man, plunged into the sea and thus were able to escape," *v. H. L.* 33 (trans. C. C., 53–55).

15 For Loukas's birth, Connor and Connor, *Life and Miracles*, xiii, suggest the year 896.

16 *v. H. L.* 54 (trans. C. C., 87).

10 The succinct definition of *space* is that it is general, produced through shared knowledge by cultures, communities, or groups of people; it contains social meaning. For example, the *space* of Boeotia is created through a shared cultural and communal meaning. Nothing makes an area Boeotian other than the meaning given to the space by humans through time and various human relationships. *Place* is more personal, giving spatial meaning to feelings, perceptions, and memories, an example here being the *place* where the relics of a saint are activated and where miracles are said to have occurred. For further reading on the concepts of *space* and *place*, see H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1991); J. N. Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (Baltimore, 1991); E. W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); Y.-F. Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, 1977); and S. Low, *Spatializing Culture: The Ethnography of Space and Place* (London, 2017).

11 For example, see the excellent volumes A. Bryer and M. Cunningham, eds., *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism: Papers from the Twenty-Eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1994* (Aldershot, 1994); M. Mullett and A. Kirby, eds., *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-Century Monasticism* (Belfast, 1994); and M. Mullett, ed., *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries* (Belfast, 2007).

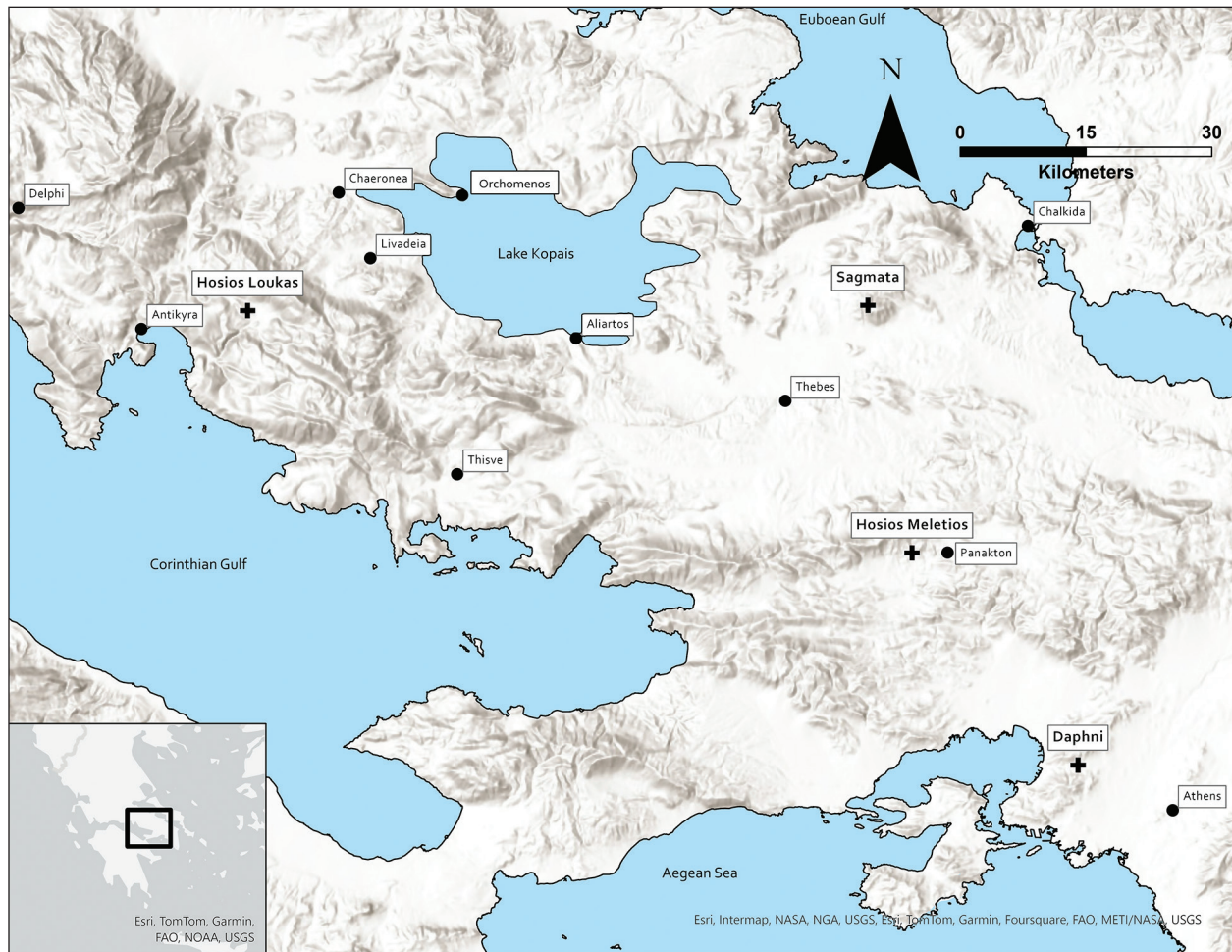


Fig. 4. Central Greece, with monasteries (cross) and significant settlements (circle) marked. Map by author.

would again return to Byzantine hands.¹⁷ As noted above, the life of Hellas's residents had been plagued by raiders from Crete, so it is no coincidence that one of Loukas's most significant visions called for an end to Arab rule on the island. His prophecy was posthumously achieved in 961 under the would-be emperor Nikephoros Phokas (r. 963–969). This prediction gained the saint and his community significant influence, both with the local elite and imperial officials. As evidence of this growing reputation, Hosios Loukas was

one of a select number of local Greek saints included in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*.¹⁸ As the notoriety of Hosios Loukas the saint grew, so too did his monastic community near the village of Steiris.

The intervening years between ca. 950 and 1022 CE witnessed the transition of Hosios Loukas from a regionally significant monastic community into an empire-wide center of sociopolitical power. Three events define this roughly seventy-five year period: (1) the reconquest of Crete in 961 by the future emperor Nikephoros

17 v. H. L. 60 (trans. C. C., 98–99). For historical overviews, see P. Charanis, "The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of the Slavonic Settlements in Greece," *DOP* 5 (1950): 140–66, at 149; and M. Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 275–98.

18 BHG 994–94b. In addition, T. Starodubcev, "Saint Luke of Steiris in the Exonarthex of the Church of the Treskavac Monastery and His Cult and Representation in the Middle Ages," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 56 (2019): 171–95, esp. 174–82, demonstrates how images of Loukas also appear in churches and monasteries in Cyprus, Italy, and Serbia by the year 1320.

Phokas—as was foretold by Loukas; (2) the emperor Basil II's victory over the Bulgarians and his visit to Athens in 1018; and (3) the construction of Hosios Loukas's grand (and second) katholikon ca. 1022.¹⁹ These three events compounded each other, resulting in Hosios Loukas's elevation into a powerful social and economic entity in Byzantine Hellas.

The second katholikon of Hosios Loukas was, and remains, one of the most impressive architectural feats attempted in Byzantine Greece, resulting in its status as one of the most intensively studied examples of Middle Byzantine art and architecture.²⁰ While the building is

19 The reconquest of Crete is the final event mentioned in the saint's vita, the broader implications of which were not yet experienced in the author's time. Nevertheless, the repercussions of Phokas's victory are difficult to understate. Crete was a haven for raiders and pirates seeking to strike the Greek littoral. The island's reintegration into the Byzantine sphere pacified the coastline, stimulating Ionian and Aegean trade routes and encouraging investment into the associated infrastructure. For material markers of these economic developments, see A. Dunn, "Historical and Archaeological Indicators of Economic Change in Middle Byzantine Boeotia and Their Problems," in *B' Διεθνές Συνέδριο Βοιωτικών Μελετών*, vol. 2 (Athens, 1995), 755–74; and S. Y. Waksman et al., "The Main 'Middle Byzantine Production' and Pottery Manufacture in Thebes and Chalcis," *BSA* 109 (2014): 379–422.

The positive effects of the Cretan campaign on Hellas were further compounded by the emperor Basil II's victory in Bulgaria in 1018, as detailed by A. Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon: Classicism and Pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens* (Cambridge, 2009), 81–91. The emperor's purpose was to visit the great pilgrimage church of the Theotokos and the famous lights of the Atheniotissa as part of a victory tour to commemorate his successful Bulgarian campaign. It seems likely that Basil was set on reaffirming his presence in the thema of Hellas, with targeted support of influential individuals, ecclesiastical sees, and monasteries. Coincidentally, or perhaps not, members of some of the region's *dynatoi* (powerful) families were also embedded at Hosios Loukas, as N. Oikonomides, "The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas," *DOP* 46 (1992): 245–55, at 248–49, has shown.

20 The scholarly focus has, for the most part, been directed at the monastery's grand architecture and impressive mosaics. One of the earliest treatments of the mosaics, by Schultz and Barnsley at the turn of the twentieth century, sees the decorative program as "a strict conformity with a hieratic tradition, [though] in several instances special efforts have been made to give specific subjects a definite interest" (Schultz and Barnsley, *Saint Luke of Stiris*, 67). Schultz and Barnsley's analysis is based almost entirely on stylistic typologies that seek to place the mosaics of Hosios Loukas within a general schema of Byzantine church decoration. In their seminal book, E. Diez and O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece, Hosios Lucas & Daphni* (Cambridge, MA, 1931), move beyond such rigidity and reject the notion that the program is mediocre due to its stylistic treatment of

a grand statement that summarizes, in part, the monastic community's rise to power—mainly in response to the events listed above—monastic founders had to balance many considerations that extended beyond strictly architectural, artistic, or liturgical choices. Instead, it is clear that the topographical setting of the katholikon and, equally, every other element of the monastic community were of paramount concern to many monastic founders. Alice-Mary Talbot has outlined many of these considerations, ranging from water access to natural beauty.²¹ The same concerns also applied to Hosios Loukas's choices and the monastery's later *begumenoí* (abbots). These men were embedded in the social fabric of central Greece and no doubt recognized that the region's topography was varied and multifaceted in terms of geologic formations and human geography. Furthermore, as Veronica della Dora has stated, "They [the Byzantine viewer] envisaged nature as a topographic system of symbols created by the Almighty to communicate with humans and thus terrestrial topographies as reflections and revelations of a heavenly

human figures within a classically inspired framework. Most importantly, Diez and Demus highlight how the mosaics "show what an immense mythical and magian world lies behind the representations which developed into the typical formulae of the hieratic art of Christianity" (Diez and Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics*, 25–26). The art, rather, depicted a world that combined the natural and supernatural into a singular expression that transported the viewer to a larger realm where aesthetics of the classical Greek world were not applicable to the depiction of saints, angels, and the heavenly realm through spatial icons. N. Chatzidakis, *Hosios Loukas: Byzantine Art in Greece* (Athens, 1997), 19, reaffirms the importance of the mosaics, stating that "there is nothing haphazard in this decorative programme and everything points to the breadth of learning and profound grasp of theological thought that must have characterised those who designed it." In addition, J. Bogdanović, "Framing Glorious Spaces in the Monastery of Hosios Loukas," in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. J. Bogdanović (New York, 2018), 166–89, has discussed the framing of the mosaics, in particular how they went beyond the frame to reify physical and sacred topographies beyond the monastery. B. V. Pentcheva, "Eternal Victory: Byzantine Territorial Expansion and Constantinopolitan Liturgical Splendour at Hosios Loukas (Steiris, Greece)," *Journal of the International Society for Orthodox Church Music* 6.1 (2022): 1–70, has recently explored the notion that the mosaics were further activated through the sights and sounds of the liturgy and the public ceremonies that were held within the katholikon. As she states, the mosaics were one cog in the production of the sound of Byzantine triumph (Pentcheva, "Eternal Victory," 64–65).

21 A.-M. Talbot, "Founders' Choices: Monastery Site Selection in Byzantium," in Mullett, *Founders and Refounders*, 43–62.

reality they shared in.”²² With such a worldview in mind, negotiating the topography and maintaining the monastery’s relationships with the natural environment were crucial to the community’s future success.

For the most part, however, the landscape’s influence on Hosios Loukas’s life and the topographical relationships involving Hosios Loukas’s monastery have been taken for granted in academic discourse. For example, the fact that monasteries favored mountains has been chalked up mainly to notions of security and social retreat, often into a landscape described by vitae as desolate or of limited human presence.²³ Without a fuller understanding of the relationship between monastery and natural topography, an essential piece of the monastic landscape puzzle is missing. The framework used herein approaches a monastery’s natural environment from the point of view that it was one part of a larger whole, a braided web of human relationships that connected the monastery to experiences that transcended typical notions of space, time, and communal memory.²⁴ Thereafter, the goal is then to break apart

the complex relationships between monastery and natural topography to better understand how the two were entangled. For example, a mountain with no view of the sea could be both insular and coastal, or a cave could be at the center of systems of faith and connect the monastery to a deeper cycle of time.

The present section will first unpack monastic relationships entangled with specific elements of the natural topography. The goal is to demonstrate how Hosios Loukas and the later monastic community were deeply interested in maintaining relationships with a more expansive natural topography. Second, the focus will shift to understanding better how these various monastic relationships with the natural topography were reified within the core monastic complex as the foundation for the monastic landscape’s axis mundi. While this emphasis on the katholikon as axis mundi reiterates the long-held belief that the building was the center of the monastery’s world, it also reframes it as part of a broader monastic landscape. I further argue below that much of the katholikon’s power would have been incomprehensible and inert without such a monastic landscape. Thus, while the katholikon is indeed the most sacred point in the monastic landscape, it was inalienable from it.

22 V. della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2016), 27. For another example, see the striking quote in Prodromos, *Vita of Hosios Meletios* 11, trans. P. Armstrong (master’s thesis, Queen’s University Belfast, 1988), 196: “God summoned Meletios here perhaps that there might be a superabundance of the grace of piety there where previously the sin of idolatry had abounded. His summons was miraculous. For a blazing pillar of fire appeared above the mountain [Mount Kithaeron] and all but called the saint through its rays to come to it. Because he recognized who was summoning him, he immediately accepted the summons and came to the mountain rejoicing and repeating the words of the psalm, ‘This is my place of rest, here shall I dwell, because I have chosen it,’ and he knew that he would stay there in future.”

23 For example, see the description of Hosios Loukas the saint in Bouras, *Architecture*, 8, where he states the following: “[Hosios Loukas was] a true ascetic who preferred the solitude of the mountains to the city. . . . [He] rejected the ancient urban civilization.” In this reading, which is typical of modern scholarship, Hosios Loukas the saint saw the mountain as a symbol of solitude and social retreat; this assertion contrasts with the arguments presented herein. For a broader generalization of monasteries retreating from urban civilization and seeking to be visually dominant in a deserted landscape, see J. Patrick, “Monastic Landscapes,” in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, ed. W. Bowden, L. Lavan, and C. Machado (Leiden, 2004), 413–45; cf. Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt*, esp. 40–75.

24 The study of the Byzantine monastic landscape is a nascent subject. Most past studies have focused on the geographic location of the katholikon and the economics of its landed holdings as

the primary factors in a monastic landscape: Talbot, “Founders’ Choices”; A.-M. Talbot, “A Monastic World,” in *The Social History of Byzantium*, ed. J. Haldon (Chichester, 2009), 257–78; and G. Makris, “Monks and Monasteries of Byzantine Thrace, 10th–14th Centuries” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2016). Other studies have taken a sociopolitical approach to the monastic landscape, such as Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt*; and K. Kourelis, “Zaraka Surrounded: The Archaeology of Settlements in the Peloponnesian Countryside,” in *The Cistercian Monastery of Zaraka, Greece*, ed. S. Campbell (Kalamazoo, MI, 2018), 193–213. Kondyli and Craft, “The Making of a Byzantine Monastic Landscape,” construct a compelling model for the monastic landscape that focuses specifically on the aspects of the sacred. However, no study of the monastic landscape has yet been attempted for Hosios Loukas, and especially of the katholikon’s role in, and relationship with, the landscape. A more general study of a Middle Byzantine regional landscape can be found in E. Tzavella, “Urban and Rural Landscape in Early and Middle Byzantine Attica (4th–12th C. AD)” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2012). For a review of approaches to monastic landscapes and monastic archaeology in the medieval West, see R. Gilchrist, “Monastic and Church Archaeology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 235–50.



Fig. 5. Region of Mount Helicon, looking northeast. Photo by author.

*A Monastic World of Mountains
and Fields, Water and Stone*

The most visually symbolic decision in the development of Hosios Loukas's monastic landscape was the choice to settle upon Mount Helicon (Fig. 5). Again, as della Dora states, "Among all geographical objects mountains are surely the most dramatic. Majestic and awe-inspiring, they are the first features to capture our attention in the landscape."²⁵ The mountain functioned to situate the monastic community in specific cultural and temporal contexts; moreover, the mountain was a means to organize and live in the landscape.²⁶ Thus,

the mountain links spatial and cultural considerations to reorganize the topography in a distinctly monastic manner and, most importantly, represents a visual cue that engages a sense of the monastic landscape within Byzantine viewers themselves. In this sense, the mountain held the power to draw in, organize, and project the memory of a saint—or his monastery—and anchor a specifically monastic landscape.

One of the most important anchor points laid in the idea that Mount Helicon offered the monastery isolation and security (Fig. 6). As noted by Talbot, security was one of the primary concerns of monasteries when choosing their location.²⁷ In the *vita* one sees clues about Loukas and his community's concern for security and isolation and how the mountain became the embodiment of their lived-in experience of the

25 della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 147.

26 A. B. Knapp and W. Ashmore, "Archaeological Landscapes: Constructed, Conceptualized, Ideational," in Ashmore and Knapp, *Archaeologies of Landscape*, 1–30, at 14; see also G. L. Barnes, "Buddhist Landscapes in East Asia," in Ashmore and Knapp, *Archaeologies of Landscape*, 101–23.

27 As Talbot, "Founders' Choices," 56, states, "*Ktetors* [monastic founders or patrons] often tried to select a safe location, ideally one that was naturally fortified."



Fig. 6. Hosios Loukas, looking east. Photo by author.

landscape. For example, early in the saint's life, there is the story of how the Bulgarians attacked Loukas's community near the seaside Mount Ioannitza in the early tenth century.²⁸ The author of the *vita* places the blame for the attack on the saint's neighbors. It was their breach of the mountain's security in isolation that was the cause for the Bulgarians' arrival.

These events can also be understood in an alternative manner. The attack may have been the consequence of Loukas and his community's misjudgment of their relationship with Mount Ioannitza. The mountain's presumably high elevation and imposing crags led Loukas to assume his community's relationship with the mountain was rooted in isolation and security. However, these qualities belied an ease of access and connection to the sea. Loukas's nascent community paid the price for this miscalculation, as the community on

Mount Ioannitza had built a connective relationship, quite the opposite of the desired security in isolation. It seems likely that the community on Mount Ioannitza thus could not see the attack coming, and the raiders had a straightforward route to access their target, via boat no less.²⁹ This experience, one can argue, heavily informed how Loukas would come to consider his future relationship with the mountain topography of Mount Helicon. Therefore, the choice to settle upon Mount Helicon was chosen, at least partly, to display a distinctive monastic brand of security and isolation, that is, isolation that is not *too* isolated and security that is based on visual surveillance of the landscape. Loukas's second experience of life upon Mount Ioannitza, when he was also driven off the mountain by invading "Turks," was additionally a probable driving force for choosing Mount Helicon as the location for his

28 Probably along the Gulf of Corinth, in the first quarter of the tenth century.

29 *v. H. L.* 33 (trans. C. C., 53).

future monastery.³⁰ Such an assumption is confirmed when one reads in the *vita* of Loukas coming to Mount Helicon to be free of seaborne disturbances, and one cannot help but think of the raids he and his communities endured earlier in his life:

How long will you choose to live by the sea where you are annoyed by many disturbances from the ships and from those who pass by? See what sort of place this is where you are standing—how temperate in climate, how pleasant, free from all disturbance and isolated from men. . . . He [Loukas] accepted their good suggestion, and he loved the place [Mount Helicon] as if it had been shown to him by God and decided to live there from then on.³¹

A second quote in the *vita* demonstrates further how Loukas's community sought a distinctively monastic brand of security and isolation in tandem through the mountainous landscape:

When those who dwelt in the villages round about learned this [that the saint was dying], even though there was a terrible storm and indescribable snow was falling, so that the roads were clearly impassable and the people house-bound, nevertheless, nothing could prevent them from traveling to see him [Loukas].³²

Therefore, while Mount Helicon was isolated, it was still accessible and visible even when a blizzard struck the region of Phokis. Moreover, the quote reveals the existence of villages, roads, and likely other infrastructure, such as bridges and farms in the region near Hosios Loukas. When put in negotiation with security, the two principles worked together to form the basis for a relational infrastructure for the monastic landscape. The mountain thus served as the basis for security and isolation but in a distinctly monastic manner. It is thus possible to assert that Loukas and his followers viewed their relationship with the mountain as isolated but connected enough to ensure the social relationships necessary for a monastery to remain wealthy and prominent.

While security and isolation were paramount concerns, the connection between the monastery and the mountain also organized, partly, systems of belief and faith that focused on Loukas. For Byzantines, sacred elements had a special resonance upon a mountain. One specific example of this is the intercessional role the mountain played as a literal “ladder to heaven” (Fig. 7).³³ Mountain peaks could be not only real locations but were also the “archetypal *topoi* and ‘maps’ that guided the ascetic in his spiritual journey.”³⁴ The physical ascent up the mountain was itself reminiscent of the rungs of devotion one must climb to reach heavenly enlightenment and salvation. The mountain, therefore, attracted specific types of monastic devotion centered on spiritual ascent and discipline. Such attraction underlines the agentive power the mountain had on the creation of sacred landscapes.³⁵ These mountain places did not necessarily need churches, shrines, or holy men to endow further sacred meaning; rather, the built environment gave these places an enduring monumentality that enveloped them in the *topoi* of a particular holy man or community.

Hosios Loukas and Mount Helicon epitomize this relationship. Mountains consistently guided Loukas's journey to being a prominent ascetic, forming a map of the saint's life. The monastery's position on a steep slope would have embodied the ascent required to reach salvation. The mountain would have played host to the physical and emotional stresses and joys of the journey to the monastery. Some of these emotions are depicted in the mosaics of Hosios Loukas's nave. These are the only mosaics that depict the landscape in the monastery. The nave is, after all, a prominent space frequented by monks and visitors. And though Manolis Chatzidakis writes that only the scene of the Nativity in the southeast squinch contains images of the

30 *v. H. L.* 50 (trans. C. C., 81–83).

31 *v. H. L.* 54–55 (trans. C. C., 87).

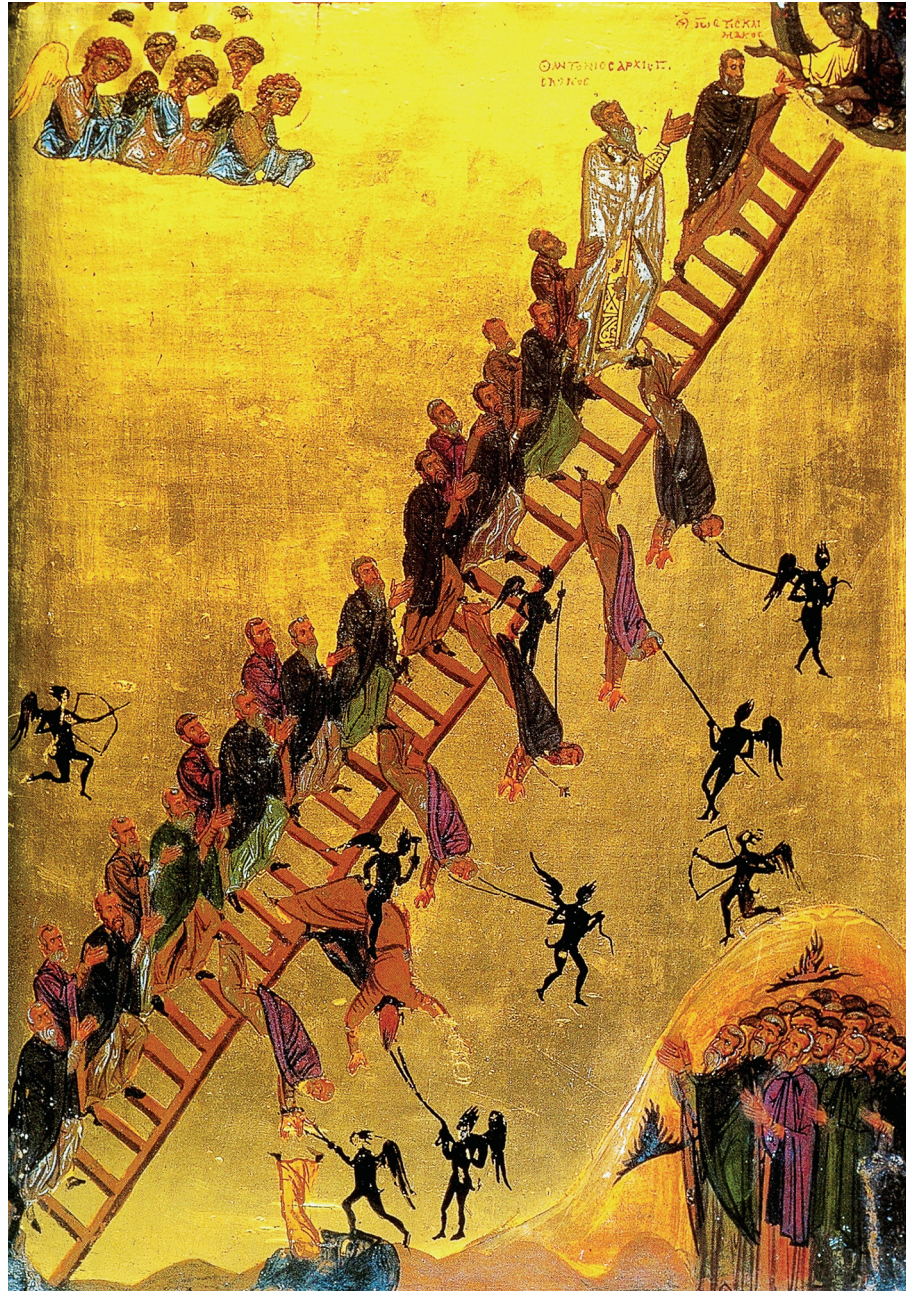
32 *v. H. L.* 64 (trans. C. C., 107).

33 V. della Dora, “Gardens of Eden and Ladders to Heaven,” in *Mapping Medieval Geographies: Geographical Encounters in the Latin West and Beyond, 300–1600*, ed. K. D. Lilley (Cambridge, 2013), 271–99; and della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 165–70.

34 della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 165.

35 V. della Dora, “Setting and Blurring Boundaries: Pilgrims, Tourists, and Landscape in Mount Athos and Meteora,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 39.2 (2012): 951–74, at 953; and Kondyli and Craft, “The Making of a Byzantine Monastic Landscape,” 137. See also Given, “Commotion,” 13–15.

Fig. 7.
Ladder of Divine Ascent,
twelfth century,
St. Catherine's
Monastery of Mount
Sinai. Photo courtesy of
Wikimedia Commons.



landscape (Fig. 8),³⁶ the mosaic of the baptism of Jesus (Fig. 9) in the southwest squinch is also representative of a rocky landscape with a river and forest represented in the scene. The ax that lies at the roots of the tree recalls Matthew 3:10 and may represent the monastery

itself—it was a place of prayer and repentance for a new chosen people before the might of God, lest they be deemed to bear “bad fruit” and tossed into the fire.³⁷ The mosaic of the Presentation, too, depicts a built environment that may have been recognizable to the viewer.

36 The Annunciation in the northeast squinch is a wall painting from ca. 1820; for further discussion and dating, see Chatzidakis, *Hosios Loukas*, 25.

37 The full KJV translation of Matt. 3:10 is as follows: “And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”



Fig. 8.
Mosaic of the Nativity,
Hosios Loukas katholikon.
Photo courtesy of
Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 9.
Mosaic of the baptism
of Jesus, Hosios Loukas
katholikon. Photo courtesy
of Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 10.
Mosaic of the Presentation,
Hosios Loukas katholikon.
Photo courtesy of
Wikimedia Commons.

The temple is shown as a domed building topped by a cross, again visually recalling the monastery (Fig. 10).

The viewer would be confronted with these images having only recently passed through fields and caves and up a mountain, where they ultimately reappeared inside a church. They would be tempted to see their own journey in these most holy images of Jesus and Mary. As Jaś Elsner and Gerhard Wolf point out, the mosaics at St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai (Fig. 11) inspired onlookers to place themselves in the landscape: "The next step for Sinai's contemporary people of God would be to climb the mountain as Moses had and confront the space of his own vision of the Lord."³⁸ Thus at Hosios Loukas, the contemporary monk, pilgrim, villager, or merchant was to reflect on their journey just as Hosios Loukas had done before them.

38 J. Elsner and G. Wolf, "The Transfigured Mountain: Icons and Transformations of Pilgrimage at the Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai," in *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai*, ed. S. E. J. Gerstel and R. S. Nelson (Turnhout, 2010), 37–71, at 52.

Mountains feature heavily in the lives of saints, and they stand as the most visual testament of a monastery's relationship with the topography. Water, however, was an equally important contributor to a monastic landscape's relational infrastructure. Talbot notes that water played an important role in monastic site selection: "[Some monastic founders] were motivated by more practical considerations, and saw it as important to establish new foundations on sites with a spring."³⁹ Such considerations also went beyond practicalities, as it was the monastery's relationship with water that often dictated notions of sacredness. Take, for instance, the following quote from the vita:

Then, clearing out the spring from the surrounding brush, he made it flow more clearly and more abundantly. How many hours were spent beautifying, clearing and planting all sorts of plants! What a beautiful paradise he made his garden, a delight not only to the taste but to the eyes. He located his cell, however, not

39 Talbot, "Founder's Choices," 54.



Fig. 11. St. Catherine's Monastery, twentieth century. Photo courtesy of B. Brenk / Dumbarton Oaks ICFA (BF.P.2001.000950).

near it and the spring, but quite far away and in a thicket so that it would not easily be noticed by most people.⁴⁰

The spring stands out as a significant backdrop for Loukas's miracle and one of the most functional elements of his monastic community (Fig. 12). Just like the existence of a mountain (e.g., Mount Helicon) within the monastic landscape, the spring's presence was in itself a prerequisite for the site's selection. Even though the author does not explicitly state this, "very pure water" is one of the things Loukas's followers hold up as a virtue of the foundation site.⁴¹ And though the spring

flowed from the mountain, it appears as a distinct entity; it was an independently miraculous space and had its own agentive influence on the monastic community. With such spiritual and bodily importance, control was necessary to stabilize and secure the supply and regulate who could access it. This was the case as springs both held the power to heal and, as mentioned above, were often the sites of miracles. Therefore, the monastic relationship with the spring was not just a practical extraction of resources for survival (i.e., drinking water) but also an economically and spiritually beneficial one wherein healing waters were of interest to both monks and visitors as the water was imbued with sacred meaning; this was holy water that flowed with the power of the saint.⁴²

40 *v. H. L.* 55 (trans. C. C., 87).

41 *v. H. L.* 54 (trans. C. C., 87) reads in full: "See what sort of place this is where you are standing—how temperate in climate, how pleasant . . . and also how well supplied with very pure water, sufficient both for the demands of thirst and for the irrigation of vegetables and plants?"

42 For the development of healing shrines, often around water sources, see A.-M. Talbot, "Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts," *DOP* 56 (2002): 153–73.

Fig. 12.
Spring, Hosios
Loukas. Photo
by author.



The early life of Loukas reveals that water was not always a life-giving element of monastic life. On the contrary, it was also a source of danger and the unknown.⁴³ The sea represents a dramatic transformation in the monastic community's relationship with water, one that the monastery had to balance for long-term survival and security. For the monastic landscape of Hosios Loukas, the Bay of Antikyra represents a crucial seaborne element (Fig. 13). Although the bay is

43 della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 236–47. In the context of Hosios Loukas, it was water (i.e., the sea) that was the purveyor of temptation through its connections to lay communities, and it was the bringer of destruction as the path by which raiders came to bring an end to Loukas's former community in the region of Mount Ioannitza. See, for example, *v. H. L.* 33 (trans. C. C., 53–55).

only about six kilometers southwest of the monastery itself, its role in the history and development of Hosios Loukas has been underemphasized—this is a point that will be revisited in the conclusion to this paper (Fig. 14). The underemphasis of the sea is in spite of the fact that Loukas is well-known to have spent much of his life, particularly his early years, near the Boeotian coast or upon an island in the Gulf of Corinth. For example, it was to the island of Ampelos that he and his followers fled during the Bulgarian incursion of 943.⁴⁴ And it

44 *v. H. L.* 50 (trans. C. C., 81–83). See T. E. Gregory, "A Desert Island Survey in the Gulf of Corinth," *Archaeology* 39.3 (1986): 16–21, for a survey of other islands in the Gulf of Corinth, mostly near modern Thisve.



Fig. 13.
Bay of Antikyra,
facing northwest.
Photo by author.

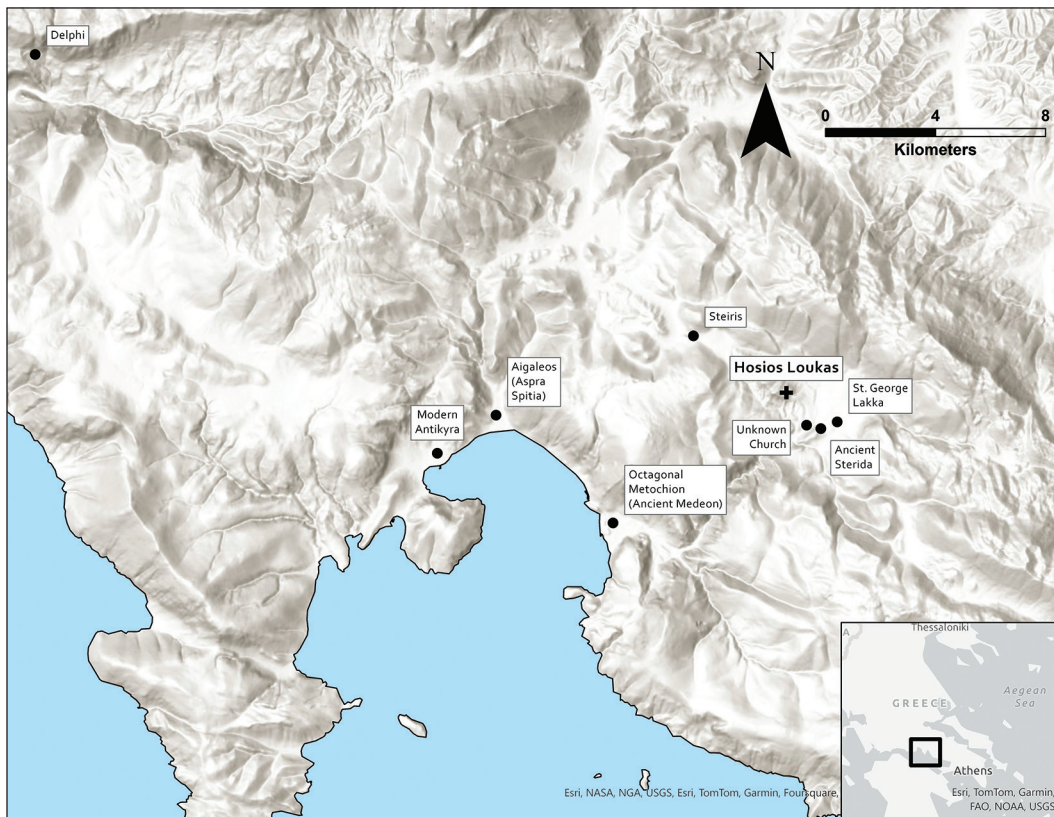


Fig. 14.
Region of
Hosios Loukas.
Map by author.

was on the seaside where Loukas spent time during his early years, and immediately before his death.⁴⁵ Hosios Loukas the saint and Hosios Loukas the monastery were therefore inextricably linked to the sea.

The linkage between Hosios Loukas and the sea enticed distinctive types of monastic relationships. One such relationship was protection. Lucia Nixon has demonstrated with archaeological survey on Crete that protection was both a material and spiritual concept.⁴⁶ Material protection and defense have been noted above, especially the violence associated with Loukas's early life. A location further from the sea naturally lessened such a threat, at least in Middle Byzantine Hellas. But beyond the presence of raiders or pirates, a close physical connection to the sea invited interaction with other social groups. For example, the Bay of Antikyra was an important mooring for travelers heading through the Gulf of Corinth, and their presence is confirmed in the vita.⁴⁷ At Hosios Loukas, indirect evidence suggests also that trade, travel, and fishing were facilitated by natural harbors, such as Antikyra and at Thisve, that were vital to a monastery's socioeconomic health.⁴⁸

This was because, in the Byzantine worldview, the spiritual had a very real power to affect the physical world, and in such a framework the sea and its harbors were significant liminal zones; they demarcated a boundary between the Christian *oikoumene* (world), of which the monastery and its landscape were prominent features, and the untamed forces that threatened that community.⁴⁹ And yet, the sea and harbors were spaces that collapsed several layers of human experience into a

heterotopic space. As Myrto Veikou and Ingela Nilsson further state, "[The harbor] is a space of central importance that connects a variety of spaces: the city to its port, the harbour to the sea. . . . It is a place that implies safety and danger at the same time."⁵⁰ Relating the story of St. Stephen the New, della Dora further explains how the sea was a space for the miraculous—much like the mountain.⁵¹ And one will recall the story of Loukas narrowly escaping the destruction of his previous community by hiding in the sea.⁵²

Thus, while economic concerns related to pilgrimage and trade necessitated Hosios Loukas's material relationship to the sea, it could only maintain these relationships with spiritual control over the danger posed by sea and harbor. Hosios Loukas set itself up as a bulwark against temptations, sins, demons, and the otherwise non-Christian landscape. Pulling into the harbor at Antikyra was therefore akin to mooring in holy waters blessed and protected by the saint himself, and it was the same saint who balanced the liminality of ports between safe and dangerous.⁵³ The monastery's relationship with the sea was such where it needed to protect its economic interests by balancing distance from and proximity to the sea, but it was also an entity from which it needed to protect its community and visitors spiritually.

While water and its accompanying spaces were both dangerous and miraculous, stone was eternal as an element of a monastery's security and its memorial connection to the landscape. The availability of stone as a natural resource thus played a significant role in attracting a monastic presence, and Boeotia was an area known for its marble and granite quarries.⁵⁴ A complete treatment of the region's geomorphology falls beyond

45 v. H. L. 22, 64 (trans. C. C., 37, 105–9).

46 L. Nixon, *Making a Landscape Sacred: Outlying Churches and Icon Stands in Sphakia, Southwestern Crete* (Oxford, 2006).

47 Based on the presence of travelers from Italy; see v. H. L. 52, 66 (trans. C. C., 85, 111).

48 Oikonomides, "The First Century," 254; the records of the Athonite monasteries studied by K. Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères byzantins, fin du X^e–milieu du XIV^e siècle* (Paris, 2006), esp. 106–16, also provide direct evidence that monastic communities participated in these activities through their economic relationship with the sea, even as far as owning fleets of ships. It is plausible to suggest Hosios Loukas owned ships as well, though no records exist.

49 As V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, 7th ed. (Ithaca, NY, 1991), 95, notes, "The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that typically locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and

between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial."

50 M. Veikou and I. Nilsson, "Ports and Harbours as Heterotopic Entities in Byzantine Literary Texts," in *Harbors as Objects of Interdisciplinary Research: Archaeology + History + Geosciences*, ed. C. von Carnap-Bornheim et al. (Mainz, 2018), 265–77, at 267.

51 della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 246–47.

52 See above, n. 14.

53 See attribute five in Veikou and Nilsson, "Ports and Harbours," 269–70.

54 K. Laskaridis, "Greek Marble through the Ages: An Overview of Geology and the Today Stone Sector," in *Dimension Stone 2004: New Perspectives for a Traditional Building Material; Proceedings of the International Conference in Dimension Stone 2004, 14–17 June, Prague, Czech Republic*, ed. R. Prikryl (Leiden, 2004), 67–71.



Fig. 15. Detail of construction materials, Hosios Loukas. Photo by author.

the scope of the present study. However, it is necessary to mention two points here as they specifically relate to the monastic landscape of Hosios Loukas. The first point concerns the pinkish and light-gray limestones that make up the bulk of the monastery's katholikon and Panagia church. These materials are likely local to the monastery, coming possibly from nearby quarries in the areas of Livadeia and ancient Delphi (Fig. 15).⁵⁵ The prominent use of these stones in the exterior facade of the monastery marked out Hosios Loukas as a local building, one that "belonged" to Hellas.⁵⁶ In doing so,

55 This preliminary conclusion comes from personal observation and discussion with local residents about the use and availability of such stones; see also M. de Vals et al., "The Stones of the Sanctuary of Delphi, Northern Shore of the Corinth Gulf, Greece," *Bulletin de la Société géologique de France* 191 (2020): 11, for analysis of lithic resources found at Delphi.

56 The concept of belonging centers on the idea that the need of groups and individuals to display and perform membership within larger collectives can inform architectural styles and encourage the use

the monastery reified its own monastic landscape in the walls of its most sacred building: the katholikon. If one remembers the significant role of mountains as ladders to heaven, the lithic embodiment of the monastery's landscape, and indeed quarries it also possibly controlled, sent a strong message that Hosios Loukas was ever present in the landscape and, similarly, that the landscape was ever present in the monastery. We should also view such use of local stone as an economical way to

of a shared architectural language that draws attention to social affiliation and enhances a sense of belonging; for this concept in a broader Byzantine monastic setting, see J. A. Mann and F. Kondyli, "The Architecture of Religious Affiliation: Lessons from the Byzantine Monastic Communities in Central Greece," in *Made in Byzantium: New Perspectives on Architecture, Decoration and Function*, ed. I. Jevtić, N. Kontogiannis, and N. Stanković (Cham, forthcoming). The connection between belonging and landscape is also visible at the monastery of Hosios Meletios, where Kondyli and Craft, "The Making of a Byzantine Monastic Landscape," 144–46, demonstrate that the monastery used specific stone in the construction of *paralavria* (dependencies) to mark the connection with its own landscape.

Fig. 16.
View of Hosios Loukas
from near the Church of
St. Nicholas, looking
northwest, ancient
Sterida. Photo by author.



construct a monastery and as one that further anchors the structure in its local topography and history—for it must be remembered that the community at Hosios Loukas had the means and desire to import at great expense gold mosaics, marble revetments, and what must have been a large amount of labor to construct their monastic core. The use of local stone was not an afterthought but a deliberate choice to connect environment and monastery.

Stone was a material to be shaped as needed, but its durability as a visual canvas meant it could be reused to suit different needs and messages. Such spolia was also utilized alongside local stone at Hosios

Loukas. In particular, the large blocks of marble used in the katholikon's lower courses are probably reused from the ancient site, such as the nearby acropolis of Sterida (Fig. 16).⁵⁷ On the one hand, the practicality of using precut blocks in a major construction project in rural Boeotia is evident; on the other hand, as Amy Papalexandrou has pointed out, the use of such spolia speaks to a broader authority over the past.⁵⁸

57 Bouras, *Architecture*, 45–46, 62.

58 A. Papalexandrou, "Conversing Hellenism: The Multiple Voices of a Byzantine Monument in Greece," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 19.2 (2001): 237–54.



Fig. 17. Interior, Hosios Loukas. Photo by author.

The monastery of Hosios Loukas was, therefore, a recognizably local construction on the topography through its use of local stone, while the use of spolia from ancient sites tied its identity to an authoritative relationship with the region's storied past. As a result, Hosios Loukas was not just any monastery; it belonged on Mount Helicon, inseparable from the region's topography, local history, and memory.⁵⁹

*A Topographical Axis Mundi:
The Katholikon of Hosios Loukas*

The heart of the Byzantine monastic landscape was the katholikon (Fig. 17). It was here that relationships with the natural topography were entangled and embodied by the architecture and activities of the monastic community. In the spirit of Mircea Eliade's description of

such a phenomenon, the axis mundi of the monastic landscape of Hosios Loukas was a tripartite unification of the katholikon as a holy mountain, saintly relics, and the crypt-cave relationship.⁶⁰ The three parts formed a vertical axis, expressed both metaphorically and physically, that grounded the monastic landscape in the natural topography, in local memory, and on a spiritual plane. My intention here is thus to highlight briefly how the katholikon of Hosios Loukas materially expressed these relationships through a three-part axis mundi.

Towering above the landscape upon the slopes of Mount Helicon, the katholikon was the most visible piece of Hosios Loukas's axis mundi. Studies focused on architectural history have honed in on the building's identification as the oldest known example of the mainland domed-octagon type of church construction

⁵⁹ In particular, Hosios Loukas parallels the phenomenon of localism that Elsner and Wolf, "The Transfigured Mountain," 39–45, describe around Mount Sinai.

⁶⁰ M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York, 1959).

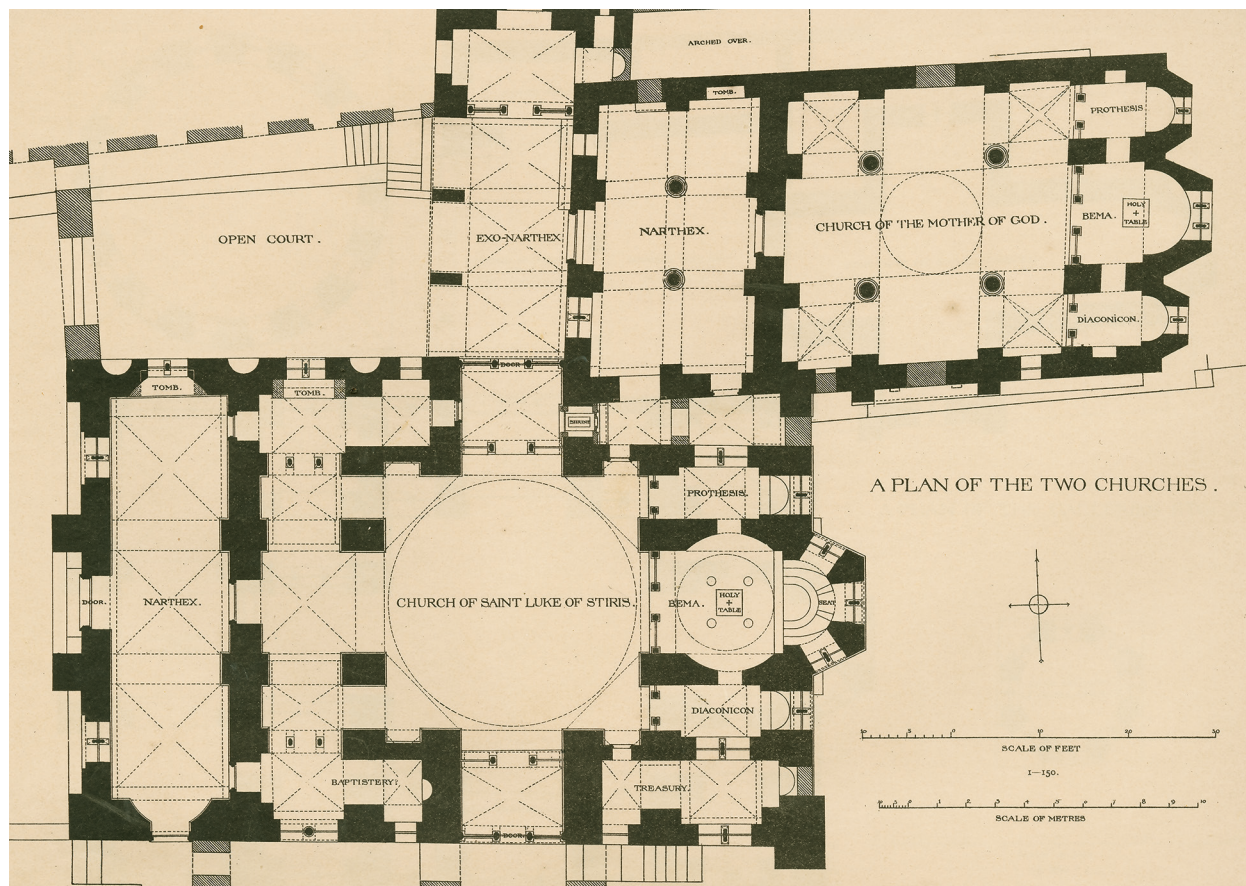


Fig. 18. Architectural plan of Hosios Loukas. Drawing after R. W. Schultz and S. H. Barnsley, *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris, in Phocis, and the Dependent Monastery of Saint Nicolas in the Fields, Near Skripou, in Bœotia* (London, 1901), pl. 1.

(Fig. 18).⁶¹ This type of architecture is defined as a variant of the cross-in-square, wherein the church employed a hemispherical dome supported by squinches and eight piers to give the interior space an openness and interior size not seen in earlier church designs.⁶² The dome of Hosios Loukas is one of the largest octagonal examples surviving outside Constantinople, formed on

a sixteen-sided drum and pierced by sixteen windows, and crowned by a cornice of dentil courses (Fig. 19).⁶³

Working in tandem with the building's monumentality, the artistic program within the katholikon symbolized the heavenly realm within the Byzantine worldview. In this sense, the katholikon was the bridge that linked the dominion of God above with the earthly realm of the monastic community, replete with

61 R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed., rev. by R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić (New Haven, CT, 1986), 475; and Bouras, *Architecture*, 48. Also see below, n. 62.

62 For the full description of the mainland domed-octagon type, see G. Millet, *L'école grecque dans l'architecture byzantine* (Paris, 1916), 105–18; and R. G. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture: The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands* (New York, 2019), 405–30.

63 In addition, the dome is proportionately shorter and squatter than most others in the mainland type, leading Bouras, *Architecture*, 60–61, to note that “[Hosios Loukas’s] low proportions [are] similar to those of Early Byzantine churches in Constantinople such as Agia Sophia and Agioi Sergios and Bacchos [and] serve to emphasize the immensity of the building and the uniformity of its interior space rather than the vertical axis”; however, it is my position here that the vertical axis was indeed still the primary focus of the monastery, connecting crypt, relics, and katholikon.



Fig. 19. Interior of dome, Hosios Loukas. Photo by author.

its own vision of a sacred cosmos that prominently featured the most sacred and powerful figures within Byzantine Orthodoxy, such as Christ Pantokrator, the Theotokos and Child, various angels and saints, as well as Hosios Loukas himself.⁶⁴ The interior space, therefore, emphasizes the connection to the heavenly realm by recreating a biblical hierarchy that extends from the divine above to the viewer below.⁶⁵ Later additions to Hosios Loukas included an exonarthex, to the already present upper gallery, that was likely added to accommodate the large number of visitors who flocked to see the saint's relics.⁶⁶ However, in

addition to accommodating a growing monastic community and increased pilgrimage traffic, the monastery also became a monument to a local saint legitimizing Byzantine hegemony over the seas and to the power of the Byzantine state to bring order to the region. As such, the abstract figures of Hosios Loukas the saint and the Byzantine imperial house worked in tandem to create a monument to Byzantine authority along a burgeoning trade network.⁶⁷

With the katholikon's topographical location, sanctified spaces, and political associations in mind, the building itself brought a Byzantine vision of the heavens into architectural form and merged this view of the cosmos with an equally emic idea of the holy

64 For a fuller bibliography of early works, see C. L. Connor, "Hosios Loukas as a Victory Church," *GRBS* 33.3 (1992): 293–308, at 293, n. 1; also see above, n. 20.

65 Ćurčić, "The Church as a Symbol," 106–7.

66 The upper gallery of Hosios Loukas is richly decorated but has thus far received little attention or publication. For a discussion of pilgrimage at Hosios Loukas and the use of pseudo-Kufic design, see A. Walker, "Pseudo-Arabic 'Inscriptions' and the Pilgrim's Path

at Hosios Loukas," in *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, ed. A. Eastmond (Cambridge, 2015), 99–123.

67 Connor, "Victory Church"; for a more expansive view of this phenomenon, see D. Krallis, "Popular Political Agency in Byzantium's Villages and Towns," *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 28 (2018): 11–48.



Fig. 20. Mosaic of the Anastasis, Hosios Loukas. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

mountain.⁶⁸ The katholikon is thus an embodiment of its topographic and cultural surroundings.⁶⁹ While physically present upon Mount Helicon, it was itself a mountain, reaching toward God's dominion above. The architecture of the monastery—its dome, manipulation of light, and artistic program—accentuates the notion that the katholikon was holy; moreover, the use of local stone, as noted above, places this holy mountain as one grounded in the local landscape.

This “holy mountain” was also the abode of the saint himself, who acted as the intermediary force

between the divine and the earthly.⁷⁰ Therefore, the relics of Hosios Loukas were in and of themselves the second segment of the monastic community's axis mundi. The relics were translated from the crypt to the katholikon in the first quarter of the eleventh century.⁷¹ As Charalambos Bouras points out, “The conjoining of the two churches, the katholikon and the Panagia, was planned to coincide with the spot of the dismantled *eukterion* (oratory), and the holy relics would be moved only vertically, maintaining the notion of the holy site fixed in space.”⁷² This description gives a very material

68 In wider anthropological thought, “emic” refers to viewing culture from the insider's perspective, while “etic” refers to an outsider's view of culture that is often connected to the observable and standardized. The terms were coined by K. L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, vol. 1 (Glendale, CA, 1954).

69 della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 147–75.

70 The concept of the monk as an intermediary figure with access to God has a long history in the Christian East; see P. Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101; and R. Morris, “The Political Saint of the Eleventh Century,” in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 43–50.

71 Oikonomides, “The First Century,” 254.

72 Bouras, *Architecture*, 19.

and vertical form to the axis mundi of Hosios Loukas. Therefore, the middle component of Hosios Loukas's axis mundi was embodied by the relics of the saint himself, which remain entombed in a chapel between the katholikon and Panagia church to this day.⁷³

The crypt was the third part of the monastic landscape's axis mundi and, like the katholikon as a holy mountain, was representative of the monastery's topography; it was the sacred cave that was so often the theater for many monastic dramas.⁷⁴ Such "cave theology" brings into focus yet again the importance of topography in the construction of sacred belief; it is best represented in the mosaics of Hosios Loukas, in particular the Nativity scene described above and the Anastasis depicted in the monastery's narthex (Fig. 20).⁷⁵ In addition, the notion of the sacred cave as the foundation of an axis mundi has found traction elsewhere in the study of ancient cultures.⁷⁶ It marks the origin point of the monastic community and records its history.⁷⁷

As the foundational element of the axis mundi, the crypt's darkness and one's physical descent into the

space heightened sensorial qualities that made the space cave-like (Fig. 21). The attraction of speluncar geography, in this case, was rooted in a biblical past, where and when caves, too, attracted the miraculous—Jesus, for instance, was in Byzantine tradition born in a cave and ascended to heaven in a cave; saints reclaimed these spaces in his name and thereby connected themselves to this narrative.⁷⁸ At the same time, the sanctifying and claiming of caves by monastic communities connected the life of their patron saint to these dramatic spaces. They bordered on the heavenly realm as spaces connected to, but also separate from, the holy mountain. Caves were the abodes of monks seeking spiritual revelation, *hesychia* (spiritual quietness), and proximity to God. Yet they were also inflection points on the monastic landscape where a monastery further deepened its ties with the landscape. This relationship was built on the notion of the cave as simultaneously dangerous—a place in need of the saint's divine power—and sacred—a place where saints went to carry out their spiritual deeds. Caves, too, were the spaces that most often embodied saintly deeds and power. As a result, they formed important markers in the landscape that outlined monastic history and identity and, in addition, were popular stops among pilgrimage routes leading toward the monastery.

Furthermore, the crypt was marked out as a sacred space by the didactic nature of its artistic program, which functioned on two levels: to communicate the life of Christ visually and to preserve the communal memory of the monastic community itself.⁷⁹ Specifically, the frescoes of the crypt record the succession of abbots that led the monastic community. As Nicolas Oikonomides observes, "[The crypt of Hosios Loukas] was dedicated to some great reforming higoumenoi of the recent past—the higoumenoi whose names were associated with the new and luxurious Hosios Loukas."⁸⁰ The crypt thus preserved and passed on the sacred lineage of the saint to his successors. This sacredness is also material, and as a final marker of the crypt's allusion to a sacred cave, it was the original resting place of Loukas's relics (Fig. 22).

73 The relics were taken from the monastery sometime after the Fourth Crusade and repatriated to the monastery only in 1986.

74 Take, for instance, the following story recorded in *v. H. L.* 62 (trans. C. C., 101): "Once when the voice [of temptation] had come to him in this fashion and when we had fled, and I [Loukas's companion, Pankratios] was with the father and the two of us had taken refuge in a certain cave together, two wandering women came to us as the sun was about to set. The father had pity on them, since they were in flight and it was also winter, and he did not think it was right to drive them away; so they were taken in with us and they were granted as much attention as was permissible. When it was time for sleep, he assigned me to one side and himself reclined on the other and the women were allowed to lie in the middle on account of the cold; the night was spent thus as if a child were close to its mother or as if stones or wood were lying side by side, for no fleshly thought entered into him at all."

75 For the term "cave theology," see della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred*, 180.

76 For example, J. E. Brady and W. Ashmore, "Mountains, Caves, Water: Ideational Landscapes of the Ancient Maya," in Ashmore and Knapp, *Archaeologies of Landscape*, 124–45, at 127, state that "a cave may also serve as *axis mundi*, as when the center of a Maya village is marked by a cave or *cenote*. . . . 'Center,' in turn, is cross-culturally the place of human creation."

77 For the succession history recorded in the frescoes of Hosios Loukas, see C. L. Connor, *Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium: The Crypt at Hosios Loukas and Its Frescoes* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), 43–67; Oikonomides, "The First Century"; and N. Chatzidakis, "La présence de l'higoumène Philothéos dans le katholikon de Saint-Luc en Phocide (Hosios Loukas): Nouvelles remarques," *CahArch* 54 (2011–2012): 17–32.

78 With specific reference to Isa. 33:16.

79 Further description of the crypt can be found in Connor, *Art and Miracles*, esp. 68–83.

80 Oikonomides, "The First Century," 252.



Fig. 21. Crypt of Hosios Loukas. Photo by H. A. Rosbach, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 22. Sarcophagus marking the original resting place for the relics of Hosios Loukas, crypt of Hosios Loukas. Photo by author.

The tripartite axis mundi of katholikon-relics-crypt and its overt verticality formed the centrifugal point of the monastic landscape around which further relationships and experiences could be formed. Each part symbolized different relationships in the monastic landscape and expressed them in a decodable fashion to the Byzantine viewer. While both the crypt and katholikon were central to the built environment of the monastery, their study as embodiments of the natural topography helps to shed further light on their importance in extending the monastic experience beyond the bounds of the core complex.

The Built Environment of the Monastic Landscape Beyond the Katholikon

Christopher Tilley writes in his seminal book, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, that space at its core “can only exist as a set of relations between things or places,”⁸¹ and further, he states that architectural space can only make sense in relation to attempts to create and bound space; in essence, architecture functions to structure human experience with and on the landscape. Annabel Jane Wharton has taken such concepts further, providing for an architectural agency in such relationships. In Wharton’s 2015 book *Architectural Agents*, she lays out a compelling argument in which buildings, “like the more mobile bodies with which they collaborate, make social space.”⁸² For Wharton, this collaborative social space can be categorized into discrete spatial markers, each of which describes how buildings work in tandem with humans and the landscape to bind, separate, discern, and code social spaces and spatial relationships.⁸³

With the works of Tilley and Wharton in mind as exemplars, the built environment of Hosios Loukas beyond the katholikon becomes a canvas to study how social groups used buildings as encoders and facilitators of specific social relationships with, and upon, the landscape.⁸⁴ Buildings, sculptures, mosaics, mountains, springs, roads, viewsheds, and textual quotes all feature

heavily in the following discussion of Hosios Loukas’s built environment, but they are studied with the above framework in mind. Furthermore, direct experience of the natural topography is emphasized. The present research would be wholly different had these communities and landscapes been studied from afar without any firsthand visit. While this notion is subjective, I maintain that without walking the mountains, visiting the sacred spaces, seeing the vistas, and speaking to the people living on these landscapes, one cannot truly study them.⁸⁵

The monastery of Hosios Loukas was composed of many buildings, from the small and quotidian to the grand and luxurious. The most prominent buildings are the monastery’s two churches, which have been discussed at length above. But the monastery also utilized many structures beyond, below, above, and outside the katholikon to express relationships with other social groups and its monastic landscape. Looking again at Barskij’s illustration of Hosios Loukas (see above, Fig. 2), the landscape is filled with fields modified for cultivation, footpaths and roads used to access the monastery, and shrines and chapels marking important junctions between these corridors. These sites were multifunctional and multipurpose entities because they were grounded by a collective of human relationships. That specific buildings served a variety of purposes is not necessarily a new concept for monastic studies; for instance, that metochia were both economic and religious centers is clear given their status as both churches and economic foci within a wider monastic network.⁸⁶ The aim here is to study these buildings and their multiple functions as part of a more extensive collection of relations that linked people and communities together and were part of the broader experience of a monastery’s authority and sanctity. As such, a katholikon was both a sacred center uniting monks within a community, abbots to emperors, and pilgrims to a collective memory of a saint’s life. But by the same principles, a metochion was also vital to the katholikon’s function on a monastic landscape, as both a place where one

81 Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, 17.

82 A. J. Wharton, *Architectural Agents: The Delusional, Abusive, Addictive Lives of Buildings* (Minneapolis, MN, 2015), 211.

83 Wharton, *Architectural Agents*, 212–13.

84 For further examples of socio-landscape relationships at Hosios Loukas, Hosios Meletios, and Daphni, see Mann and Kondyli, “The Architecture of Religious Affiliation.”

85 I. Hodder, “Writing Archaeology: The Example of Site Reports in Context,” *Antiquity* 63 (1989): 268–74; I. Hodder, ed., *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology: The Example at Çatalhöyük* (Cambridge, 2000); and Given, *Landscape and Interaction*.

86 K. Smyrlis, “The Management of Monastic Estates: The Evidence of the Typika,” *DOP* 56 (2002): 245–61; and Kondyli and Craft, “The Making of a Byzantine Monastic Landscape.”

experienced the monastery's authority over farmland and roads, and as an outpost that embedded the life of the saint in the topography. The bundle of relationships between the monastery, other communities, and the topography contributes equally to our knowledge of monastic spatial practices and, by expanding beyond a *katholikon*-focused model, will add an extra layer of analysis to function alongside future studies concentrated on settlement patterns, landscape use, and economic production.

A Saintly Valley

The valley to the immediate east of Hosios Loukas is one of the first topographical features one encounters beyond the monastery's *katholikon* (Fig. 23). It is mainly composed of arable fields that were likely under the control of the monastery during the Middle Byzantine period. Such agriculturally productive land is at a premium in the region of Mount Helicon and would have been a prized asset of the monastery. The remnants of a large Byzantine olive press remain on display at the monastery. The mill's presence within the monastic complex underscores the close connection between the mountain and the land below, as many of the raw olives used in the mill likely came from the monastery's eastern valley. Furthermore, the Ephorate of Antiquities of Boeotia has located a large press in the valley near a stream that runs to the southwest of ancient Sterida.⁸⁷

In addition, the fields were in themselves an important part of the built environment, as it was generally from the fields that monastic wealth was extracted. The fields were additionally a theater for Loukas's monastic performances; it was here that Loukas went to display the essential monastic quality of charity and to demonstrate his ability to forsake the pleasures of the flesh (e.g., the denial of material wealth and the ability to fast to the extreme):

What a perfect example in this of his goodness: when he went out into the fields to sow seed, the pouches of the poor received the greater part of it, or at least an equal part. There was an exceedingly gracious result from this action, for it followed from God's original goodness that there should be rewards of this kind: in

the same proportion that the seeds were diminished by sharing them with the poor the harvest became greater and more abundant.⁸⁸

Agricultural activity under the direction of Hosios Loukas and the sacred authority imbued in the landscape by the memory of the saint were further augmented by a series of chapels in the monastery's eastern valley. These chapels intermixed economic and sacred functions. One prominent example is the chapel of St. George Lakka (Fig. 24). Lakka's location is in the olive groves of Hosios Loukas's prominent eastern valley, close to the ancient acropolis of Sterida. The structure was excavated and later renovated by the Greek Ministry of Culture in the early 1990s.⁸⁹ The remains suggest a building of Middle Byzantine origin, with a simple, single-aisle construction. The one-roomed nave has a mosaic floor—since covered for preservation—and spoliated stone and sculpture likely from nearby Sterida. The dating of the chapel, its use of similar geometric motifs in its sculpture, and the strong sense of interconnectedness and intervisibility between it and the much more imposing *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas upon the nearby mountain all suggest Lakka was part of Hosios Loukas's landed portfolio.

The western exterior of the chapel deserves further discussion, where well-cut stone blocks form an enclosed area outside the entrance to the chapel (Fig. 25). This part of the chapel is entirely intervisible with Hosios Loukas, suggesting a clear and visible line of communication and movement between the two sites. In particular, the blocks are carved with geometric patterns and rosette-style carvings inspired by those at Hosios Loukas. I propose that the exterior blocks were meant to recall the interior of the grand monastery, bringing forth the experience of Loukas's authority and sanctity to the fields below Hosios Loukas. If the blocks are indeed *in situ*, the connection could perhaps be even more robust, as they may be an attempt to replicate the original marble templon of Hosios Loukas. Lakka and its recreation of the most sacred space in the monastic landscape stand as a dominant symbol of authority and sanctity in the fields below Hosios Loukas. This reification would make accessible one of the holiest places in

88 *v. H. L.* 6 (trans. C. C., 13).

89 A. Koilakou, "Θέση Λάκκα—Ναός Αγίου Γεωργίου," *Αρχ.Δελτ.* 54 B1 (1999): 119–20.

87 I thank Eli Tzavella for this information.



Fig. 23. Hosios Loukas, view toward the east. Photo by author.



Fig. 24. St. George Lakka, looking northwest with Hosios Loukas in the center. Photo by author.



Fig. 25. St. George Lakka, western exterior. Photo by author.

the monastic landscape, albeit seemingly in one of its most ordinary parts: the field. In addition, such a symbol of sacred authority is significant because it helps the monastery organize the landscape in both social and temporal terms. Lakka would have fit within a wider network of chapels owned and operated by Hosios Loukas and helped to tie Hosios Loukas to its eastern valley further, hosting a particular feast day (presumably to St. George), facilitating processions like those seen in the image of Barskij, and making available the power of Loukas to the workers below in the field.

Hosios Loukas's eastern valley was undoubtedly built up beyond the chapel of St. George, though much of the evidence has been lost to time. For instance, there is the church of St. Nicholas on the acropolis of ancient Sterida.⁹⁰ The church occupies the site of an ancient temple to Asklepios, the ancient Greek god of medicine and healing, as well as sharing certain spoliated

elements with Hosios Loukas—a similarity shared by the St. George chapel. A short distance northwest of the Sterida acropolis, there are also the remains of a large construction near a prominent stream running through the valley (Fig. 26). To my knowledge, there is no publication of the structure, but it is considerably larger than the St. George Lakka chapel. Surface analysis raises the possibility that it is a church, with the remnants of an apsidal room in an east–west orientation consistent with church construction.⁹¹ The building fits the profile of a metochion on two initial basis points. One, the building's location provides a strong visual connection to the monastery of Hosios Loukas. Its size would suggest strong financial support, with Hosios Loukas the most likely benefactor. And two, to the immediate east of the unknown “church” are the remains of a mill, probably of the early modern period or later. This later evidence supports the notion that

90 A. Koilakou, “Άγιος Νικόλαος στην ακρόπολη Στείριδας,” *Αρχ. Δελτ.* 61 B1 (2006): 517.

91 This building merits further study in order to provide a detailed overview of its function and dating.



Fig. 26.
Unknown church,
southwest of
ancient Sterida.
Photo by author.

Hosios Loukas's eastern valley retained its economic potential well into the postmedieval period.

Moving back up the mountain, Hosios Loukas's elevated placement upon Mount Helicon gave the community a strong, eastern-facing view of the landscape; however, the monastery was nearly blind to its western approach, including the road leading to Steiris, Distomo, and north toward the Boeotian plain. At

some point, it appears the monastery augmented its relationship with Mount Helicon by constructing a western-facing *kastro*, or castle-like structure, on the opposite side of the mountain. The remains of the entire complex are heavily overgrown and ruined, but some of its masonry is still visible, standing up to four meters tall in some spots (Fig. 27). The most prominent feature of the *kastro* is a likely tower. The building technique



Fig. 27. Kastro wall, west of Hosios Loukas. Photo by author.



Fig. 28. Detail, kastro wall. Photo by author.

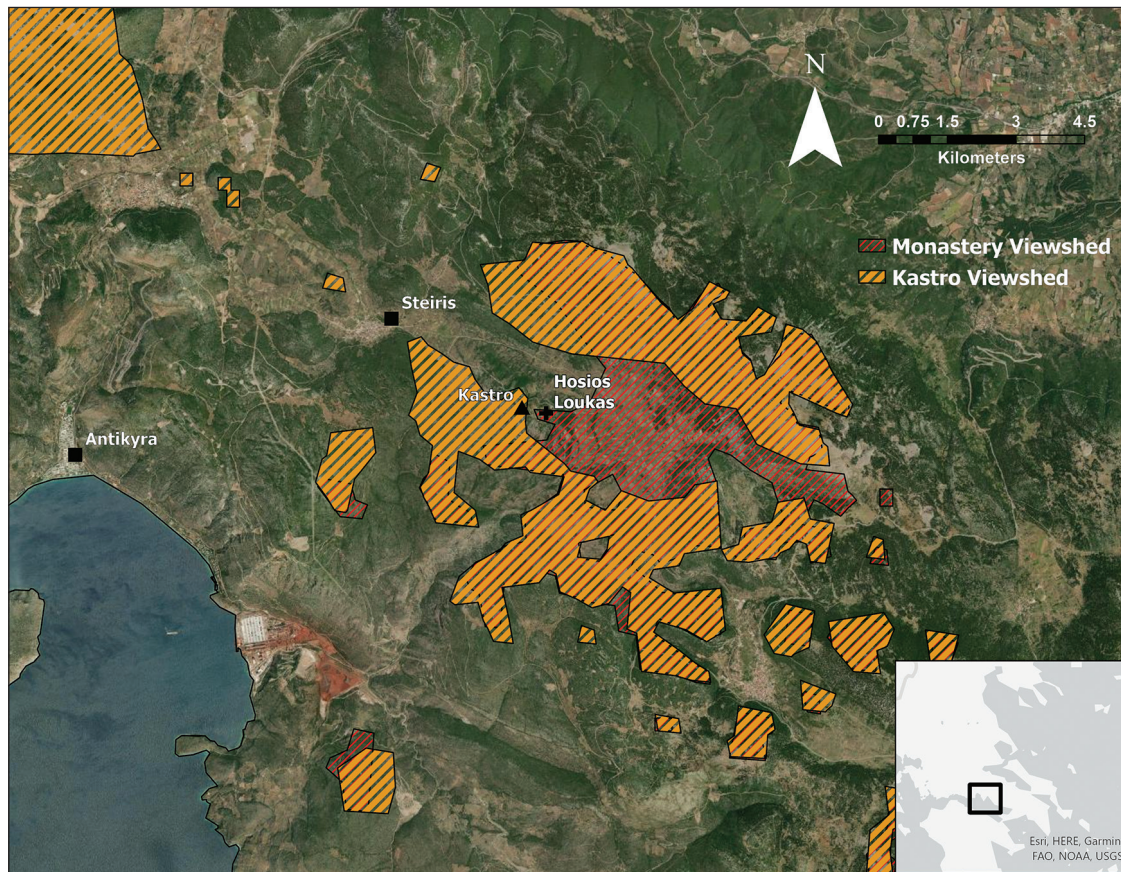


Fig. 29.
Combined
viewshed, Hosios
Loukas and the
western kastro.
Map by author.

consists of large limestone blocks, possibly of classical origin from nearby Sterida, and tile inserts (Fig. 28). The exact dating of the tower is difficult to determine, as there is the possibility that it could be of Latin or Catalan origin rather than Byzantine, especially as there was a purported fort established in the area during the thirteenth century.⁹² Without excavation contexts to draw from, no firm dating can be offered here, though the building technique sets the tower apart from other Frankish towers in Boeotia, and it does not appear in Peter Lock's seminal catalogue.⁹³

Given the kastro's proximity to the monastery of Hosios Loukas, it stands to reason that this location

likely attracted monastic activity rooted in relationships of mobility and surveillance, both in the Middle Byzantine and Crusader periods. These relationships would materially manifest in the form of a tower to maintain visual control over the landscape and organize movement through the narrow mountain pass. In this way, the kastro site completes a visual circuit of surveillance that aided in the defense of the monastery and its properties from potential threats from the west, but it also looked inward to supervise the lands under the monastery's control (Fig. 29).⁹⁴

92 N. Kontogiannis, "Ανιχνεύοντας την καταλανική Βοιωτία: Η αμυντική οργάνωση του Δουκάτου των Αθηνών κατά τον 14^ο αιώνα," in *Καταλανο-Αραγωνική κυριαρχία στον Ελληνικό χώρο*, ed. M. Dourou-Eliopoulou, T. Tanoulas, and N. Kontogiannis (Athens, 2012), 67–109, at 85–86. Unfortunately, there is a distinct lack of surface ceramics to aid in dating the kastro.

93 P. Lock, "The Frankish Towers of Central Greece," *BSA* 81 (1986): 101–23.

94 For monasteries as fortified centers in the landscape, see F. Kondyli, "Tracing Monastic Economic Interests and Their Impact on the Rural Landscape of Late Byzantine Lemnos," *DOP* 64 (2010): 129–50; for the inward-looking nature of towers, see C. Tsigonaki, "Crete, a Border at the Sea: Defensive Works and Landscape-Mindscapes Changes (Seventh–Eighth Centuries A. D.)," in *Change and Resilience: The Occupation of Mediterranean Islands in Late Antiquity*, ed. M. A. Cau Ontiveros and C. M. Florit (Oxford, 2019), 163–92, esp. 176–80.

Viewshed analysis helps to visualize how the monastery and the tower worked in sync to achieve several goals for the community at Hosios Loukas.⁹⁵ The visual circuit's foremost function was to supervise and surveil the whole of the area around the monastery, including the monastic complex itself and villages, farmland, and roads. Its extensive reach was felt as soon as one left the area of Steiris. Second, the tower also may have functioned as a method of communication. It is easy to imagine its role in relaying information to and from Steiris and Distomo, especially in times of danger. And third, the visual presence of the tower would have brought a degree of safety to the people under its gaze. In this sense, those knowing they were under the tower's protection would have also known they were under the saint's protection. Given the power and military role of saints and the Theotokos in Byzantine culture, this would have been a powerful force through which to bring an area and its constituent communities under a single umbrella of authority and sanctity.⁹⁶

Hosios Loukas's Monastic Coastline

Hosios Loukas, like most prominent monasteries of the Middle Byzantine period, owned lands in patchwork fashion across the region where its reach extended far from the towers lording over its immediate surroundings.⁹⁷ The primary stitches in this patchwork of fields, vineyards, and groves were metochia that broke the dichotomy of either monastic or secular structures in function. Instead, these metochia were the signifiers of a distinct monastic presence and organized the distribution of monastic products, people, and influence.

In modern Greece, the name *μετόχι* (metochi) survives as a common toponym for villages and fields. One such example is on the eastern shores of the Bay of Antikyra, where one will find the prominent Metochi Valley—now occupied by a large aluminum factory.⁹⁸ The valley is only a short distance of approximately seven

kilometers to the southwest of Hosios Loukas. The monastery maintained a strong relationship with this part of the bay, which is dominated by a promontory containing the archaeological remains of ancient Medeon. In the valley, French archaeologists working with the Greek Ministry of Culture recorded a large, octagonal church with a crypt. The architectural footprint of the building immediately recalled Hosios Loukas as a formidable structure controlling the valley.⁹⁹ The church used spoliated limestone blocks from Medeon in its construction, and the marbles of the iconostasis were also found in the metochion's crypt, providing further evidence that it was a well-funded outpost of Hosios Loukas. Interestingly, the octagonal metochion was converted into a large, fortified tower sometime in the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁰ In tandem with the kastro controlling the western approach to Hosios Loukas, the combination of the two fortified structures was the foundation of a strong defensive line protecting the interests of the monastery and reinforcing its sacred presence.

On the northern shores of the bay near modern Paralia Distomou, Hosios Loukas also maintained a presence. This metochion is called Aigialos by Eustathios Stikas and was in the area of Antikyra called Aspra Spitia.¹⁰¹ Not much can be said about this small dependency other than the documentary evidence put forth by Stikas that suggests that Hosios Loukas long maintained a relationship with the Aspra Spitia area, and there is a strong possibility that the Aigialos metochion mentioned in 1568 correlates with property owned by the monastery during the Byzantine period. Beyond Aspra Spitia and the area of Medeon, Hosios Loukas's relationship with the Bay of Antikyra was further enhanced by the saint's previous habitation of the area. The nearby island of Ampelos and the area of Kalamion were Loukas's home for several years before founding his monastic community on Mount Helicon.¹⁰² Unfortunately, there is no evidence of the

95 A viewshed analysis models how far one can see from a given point, primarily using GIS software for analysis.

96 B. V. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," *ArtB* 88.4 (2006): 631–55; and Kondyli, *Rural Communities*, 138–49.

97 Smyrlis, "The Management of Monastic Estates"; and Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères*.

98 For the rescue excavations of the area, see C. Vatin, *Médéon de Phocide: Rapport provisoire* (Paris, 1969), 87–98.

99 Blocks from the ruins of ancient Medeon were also likely reused.

100 Vatin, *Médéon de Phocide*, 97–98.

101 The name is apparently derived from the phrase *μετόχι στο γαλό* and comes from later documents about Hosios Loukas's landholdings; see E. Stikas, *Το οικοδομικόν χρονικόν της μονής του Ὁσίου Λουκά Φωκίδος* (Athens, 1970), 226–28.

102 For Ampelos, see above, n. 44; for Kalamion and the possibility that it may also be a metochion of Hosios Loukas, though likely a later one, see J. Koder and F. Hild, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini 1: Hellas and Thessalia* (Vienna, 1976), 179.



Fig. 30. Agios Loukas, Thisve. Photo by author.

Hosios Loukas monastery maintaining a metochion on the island. However, there was Middle Byzantine habitation on the nearby island of Daskalio, thus suggesting that the bay in its entirety was a thriving economic center, largely coinciding with the rise of Hosios Loukas.¹⁰³

Thus, an investment in this area makes sense if one considers the saint's personal knowledge of the area and

the relationships he and his successor community likely maintained. The bay and its coastal properties offered critical socioeconomic access to the broader thema of Hellas and made it quite easy for merchants and pilgrims to visit the monastery, thereby connecting Hosios Loukas to a wider network of properties, communities, and social structures. Furthermore, the fact that Loukas had a strong personal connection to the bay meant that by building up its presence, the monastery further intertwined its own identity with the landscape. The bay was

103 A. Sideris, *Antikyra: History and Archaeology* (Athens, 2014), 227.

not just an economic boon; it was an essential part of a monastic landscape distinctly oriented toward Loukas the saint and his monastery.

Further to the east along the northern shore of the Gulf of Corinth, Hosios Loukas likely maintained an expanded coastal presence at Byzantine Kastorion (modern Thisve). A small church by the name of Agios Loukas is located here (Fig. 30). Though the name references St. Luke, Archie Dunn suggests that the title “Agios” is a corruption of Hosios and thus the church directly references Loukas of Steiris.¹⁰⁴ The presence of Hosios Loukas in Thisve also provides yet another example of the monastery’s interest in building up an economic base and intermixing it with the memory of the saint through a carefully curated built environment. Kastorion was, after all, the birthplace of Loukas and, perhaps not coincidentally, another important mooring in the Gulf of Corinth.¹⁰⁵

While Hosios Loukas’s position on Mount Helicon emphasized the monastery’s illusionary detachment from civil society, the monastery was also fundamentally a coastal entity. The saint’s identity and the later community’s very survival depended on the coastline of Boeotia, and this landscape was integrated into the character of the monastery. Therefore, just as the neighboring valleys, fields, and mountains must be considered integral parts of Hosios Loukas’s monastic landscape, so too must the sea and the littoral. For it is clear the monastery went to great lengths to assert its presence there and to claim this landscape as its own.

A Landscape of Movement and Memory

The monastic landscape is, by definition here, a sociocultural landscape formed through interconnected human relationships and experiences that are

oftentimes bound through movement.¹⁰⁶ Such movement, as Brenda Farnell has aptly emphasized, is akin to language in the sense that it is also an expressive medium of human culture.¹⁰⁷ Thus, understanding relationships and experiences rooted in movement is essential to understanding the monastic landscape.¹⁰⁸ Memory, too, was nested in the monastic landscape, and it was human movement that often triggered various human senses and identities.¹⁰⁹ The two processes, one physical (movement) and the other metaphysical (memory), are inseparable—as one climbed a holy mountain, descended into the darkness of a sacred cave, processed around the relics of the saint, or prayed in the grand katholikon, movement and memory worked in tandem.¹¹⁰ In the sections above, I have laid the foundation for understanding the natural topography and the built environment in the context of the monastic landscape. The present discussion aims to establish movement and memory as two additional processes that play a crucial role in the formation of a monastic landscape.

For Hosios Loukas, movement and memory are best expressed through the ritual activity of pilgrimage. The connection between Hosios Loukas’s monastery and the ritual act of pilgrimage is well-documented in the saint’s vita and the aforementioned architectural additions to the monastery throughout the eleventh

104 See his initial report: A. Dunn, “The Survey of Thisve (Byzantine Kastorion and Multiperiod Complex of Sites): 2007–2009,” *Dumbarton Oaks*, <https://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/project-grants/dunn-2008-2009>.

105 Hosios Loukas’s monastic landscape also extended beyond the Bay of Antikyra and the area of Thisve. This extension will be addressed in a forthcoming work to elucidate the complex socioeconomic structures that Hosios Loukas maintained and used to extend the monastery’s presence throughout Byzantine Hellas and beyond, including metochia on Euboea and the grand metochion of St. Nicholas Kambia.

106 For further discussion on the formation of cultural landscapes, see Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*; T. Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays and Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London, 2000); J. Thomas, “Archaeologies of Palace and Landscape,” in *Archaeological Theory Today*, ed. I. Hodder (Cambridge, 2001), 165–86; and E. Gibson, “The Archaeology of Movement in a Mediterranean Landscape,” *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 20.1 (2007): 61–87.

107 Farnell, “Moving Bodies,” esp. 342.

108 For example, Gibson, “Archaeology of Movement,” 63, states in her study of social landscapes: “Social landscapes are formed through a range of interconnected social and ideological processes: the formation and experience of place, memories, time and movement. The social landscape is explored through investigating the interplay of these processes and the material culture that embodies and shapes them.”

109 For memory nested in a cultural landscape, see C. Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford, 2004), 26. At Hosios Loukas, see Walker, “Pseudo-Arabic,” for discussion of the pilgrim’s experience of the monastery.

110 For an overview of anthropological theories on mobility and the body, see Snead, Erickson, and Darling, *Landscapes of Movement*.

century.¹¹¹ As Alicia Walker has written, the monastic complex was marked with specific symbols to script the pilgrim's experience within Hosios Loukas, underpinning a temporal and memorial connection to the Holy Land and one's experience of a biblical timeline through the lens of the monastery.¹¹² Pilgrims both local and foreign could experience this allusion to the Levant as the vita tells us of visitors from both Boeotia and Italy specifically.¹¹³ Both sets of pilgrims are important to keep in mind as the present analysis progresses, because it was to both pilgrims near and far that Hosios Loukas expressed its connection with the landscape. Furthermore, as Anthony Bryer has demonstrated, successful monastic centers often became centers of local *patriida* (patriotism) that placed them at the center of local identities—a placement often facilitated and solidified by the ritual act of pilgrimage.¹¹⁴ It is important to emphasize that the role of the monastic landscape was not just to activate the landscape in a way that facilitated the pilgrim's physical and spiritual journey; its purpose was to penetrate the very identity of the pilgrim by enveloping them in the history and memory of the monastery itself through control of their movement and the perception of the landscape through which they moved.

Two case studies will be presented here that demonstrate how Hosios Loukas's use of the built environment marked specific locations on the landscape where the monastic community tied its own thread to the tapestry of communal memory, thereby rethreading the landscape in its image.¹¹⁵ The first case study highlights how human movement activated the *katholikon* of the monastery into a wondrous relic. The second case study seeks to define Hosios Loukas's relationship with

the history of Boeotia and, more specifically, with the legacy of pilgrimage engendered by ancient Delphi.

The Katholikon as Reliquary

The effect of the dramatic reveal is often used for both physical and literary purposes. For the Byzantines, the best example is the function of the reliquary. It is a holy container meant to be admired and didactic; however, it is also an object that obscures and shadows the authentic relic within. Elsner outlines such tension between opulent display and obfuscation in the following terms:

The holy is guaranteed by the three-dimensional frame in which it must be housed . . . but it is also hidden and made secret by its boxing away in a dispensation wherein its box participates through opulent display. The hidden relic is so much more special because of the visual, material, and sensual richness of its container, so much more valuable because of the precious items included in its frame. Moreover, the boxing away instantly creates a further dispensation of opening and revealing—the potential showing of a usually hidden mystery on a given occasion or to a special audience. That is, concealment is also the opportunity for a performative theatricality of ostentation.¹¹⁶

In Elsner's view, St. Catherine's was not just a monastery but also itself a relic encased in a reliquary made of mountains and memories. Hosios Loukas, too, prepared an experience focused on the "hidden relic" in agreement with other individuals, institutions, and monasteries. The evidence for such social relationships is found in the so-called Thebes Confraternity document.¹¹⁷ The document's list of signatories includes

111 *v. H. L.* 9, 21, 58, 66 (trans. C. C., 17, 35, 91–95, 111), describes pilgrims with various motivations from Italy, the Black Sea, and within Hellas.

112 Walker, "Pseudo-Arabic," 113–18.

113 See above, n. 47.

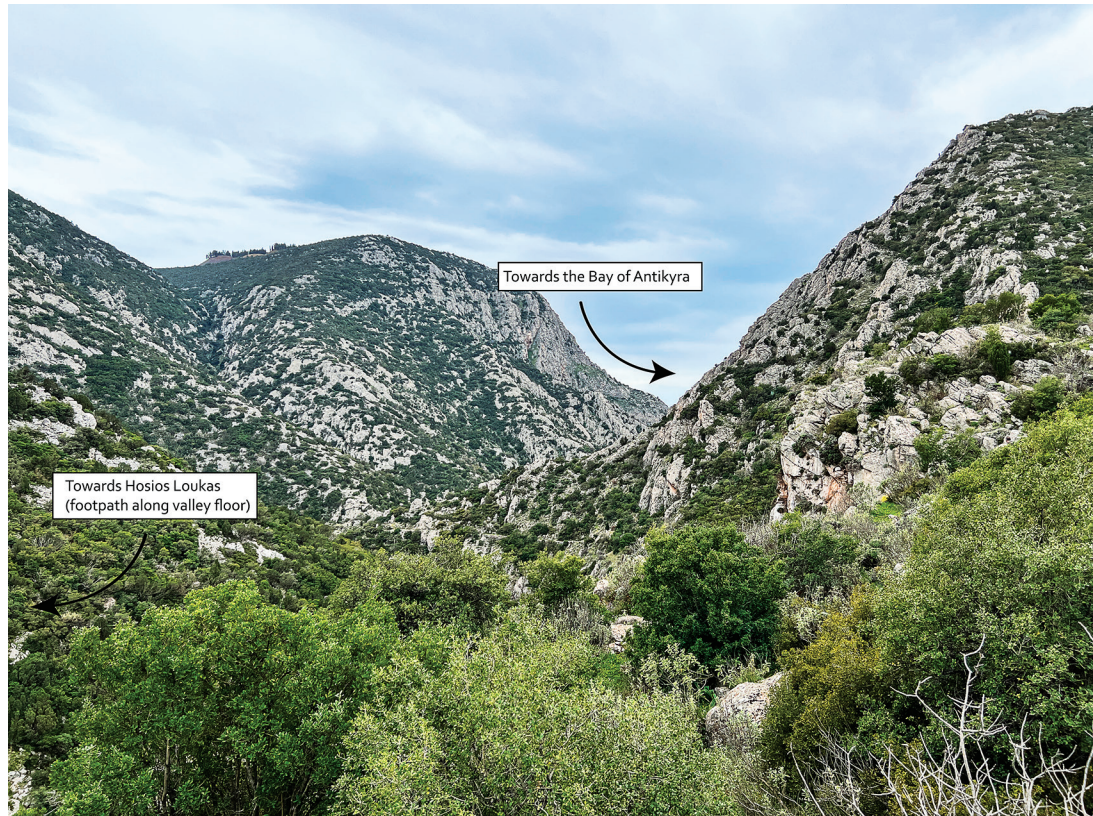
114 A. Bryer, "The Late Byzantine Monastery in Town and Countryside," in *The Church in Town and Countryside: Papers Read at the Seventeenth Summer Meeting and the Eighteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1979), 219–41.

115 A similar phenomenon has been observed at Hosios Meletios and that monastery's construction of a sacred landscape upon and around Mount Kithaeron; see Kondyli and Craft, "The Making of a Byzantine Monastic Landscape."

116 J. Elsner, "Relic, Icon, and Architecture: The Material Articulation of the Holy in East Christian Art," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. C. Hahn and H. Klein (Washington, DC, 2015), 13–40, at 17.

117 The Thebes Confraternity document is dated to 1048. For a translation and analysis of it, see J. Nesbitt and J. Wiita, "A Confraternity of the Comnenian Era," *BZ* 68.2 (1975): 360–84. For social relationships, Neville, *Authority*, 72, states the following: "The Confraternity of Thebes was another context in which relationships were defined through metaphoric kinships. . . . When the members of the Confraternity spoke about brotherhood, they were referring to a set of behaviors associated with an idealized fraternity."

Fig. 31.
Gorge connecting
Hosios Loukas's
eastern valley to the
Bay of Antikyra, view
to the southwest.
Photo by author.



a veritable list of regional elite persons and institutions. Specifically, the Confraternity of the Theotokos Naupaktetissa was charged with the continued patronage and care for an icon of the Theotokos, who was vital to Hosios Loukas's sacred identity.¹¹⁸ Hosios Loukas is the most likely founder of the confraternity, as demonstrated by the placement of the monastery's abbot, Theodosios, atop the list of signatories.¹¹⁹

The important connection between the Thebes Confraternity and the katholikon of Hosios Loukas as a reliquary is that such ritual activity likely also included a transitive binding and reverence to Hosios Loukas

since it was an icon in the monastery's care. If one imagines the icon moving through metochia, up mountains, past chapels, and along roads, all these spaces become imbued with the Theotokos's power, coincidentally also under Hosios Loukas's auspices.¹²⁰ The landscape, therefore, was further transformed into a three-dimensional frame that held the reliquary and relics of Hosios Loukas, as both distance and topographical features obscured the "relic" from view, thus setting up a dramatic reveal as one traversed the roads and paths toward the monastery.

The three-dimensional frame of Hosios Loukas as reliquary thus began as soon as a pilgrim landed at the port of Antikyra or entered the foothills of Mount Helicon and was activated through ritual movement (Fig. 31). By applying Elsner's framework above to the

118 For example, the original katholikon of Hosios Loukas by this point had been rededicated to the Virgin (the current Panagia church).

119 Nesbitt and Wiita, "Confraternity," 374; and Oikonomides, "The First Century," 247–48. Additionally, there is some doubt that the confraternity met regularly; however, Neville, *Authority*, 174, has drawn attention to a fresco of a similar confraternity at Arta that demonstrates that the religious icon at the core of a confraternity's mission likely did move through the landscape, even if not always exactly as prescribed.

120 R. Ousterhout, "Constructing and Deconstructing Sacred Space in Byzantine Constantinople," in *Sacred Spaces and Urban Networks*, ed. S. Yalman and A. H. Uğurlu (Istanbul, 2019), 89–104; for a general bibliography of the intersection between semiotics and movement, see Farnell, "Moving Bodies," 358–59.



Fig. 32.
View of Hosios
Loukas from the
eastern valley
floor, view looking
northwest. Photo
by author.

monastery of Hosios Loukas, the *katholikon* itself became the relic and the topography of Mount Helicon the frame. The pilgrim or visitor was required to move through the landscape to open the reliquary—that being, the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas—and thereby reveal the hidden relics. The monastery’s location on the slopes of Mount Helicon manipulates a dichotomy between visibility and invisibility (see above, Figs. 3, 13). From the west, the monastery is hidden, and from the eastern part of the bay—the site occupied by the modern aluminum factory—the monastery is unseen as one passes through the steep ravines of the mountains separating Hosios Loukas from the coast. From both directions, the building only becomes visible as one continues the journey and crests the last bend of the road, just as the abbot would bring the relics of Loukas from behind the *bema* to show to the assembled crowd (Fig. 32).

The effect of this dramatic unveiling is cumulative. The pilgrim, for example, was already in a physical act of ascension, walking up the long, arduous mountain road to the monastery. The physical ascent was

intimately tied to the spiritual ascension that was culturally ascribed to the mountain as a ladder to heaven. Most pilgrims would likely have already interacted with someone familiar with the life of Loukas prior to visiting the monastery and perhaps were told of other important sites in the area. Thus, as pilgrims climbed this ladder, they passed the sacred caves, springs, and forests associated with the life of Hosios Loukas, preparing them for the final reveal. The final rung on the ladder is the revelation of the *katholikon*, the architectural embodiment of the saint. Then, the pilgrim was to enter the “relic” only to have the genuine relics of the saint again hidden from them. Throughout the experience, movement is the key kinetic action that brings the monastic landscape to the fore of human experience.

Ancient Memory and Byzantine Pilgrims

The curation and transformation of the landscape and communal memory were foundational pillars of Hosios Loukas’s relationship with the natural topography. The monastery’s location on Mount Helicon immediately



Fig. 33. Valley connecting ancient Delphi and ancient Kirra, view looking southwest. Photo by author.

connected the community to the deep history of the region. For example, Helicon was often the backdrop for the Greek poet Hesiod, and where Narcissus was inspired by his own image. But it was the memory of ancient Delphi that perhaps loomed largest over the region's mountains, bays, and valleys (Fig. 33). As a place built around the mobility of people and ideas,

Delphi created and reformed relationships throughout the region, not just at its religious core, and especially between itself and local communities, ancient Greek polities, and most of all with the natural topography.

Ancient Delphi was fundamentally a community built around the act of pilgrimage. Located upon Mount Parnassus, just to the west of Hosios Loukas,

the site's identity was based around an association with the ancient Greek god Apollo.¹²¹ Delphi began to gain significant prominence from about the eighth century BCE, wherein it became a destination for pilgrims to receive oracular advice from the Pythia (the oracle of Apollo). The Temple of Apollo housed the Pythia, but the city also contained the omphalos—a stone monument seen to be the literal center of the earth.¹²² Delphi additionally was endowed with a wide swath of sacred lands around the city's temples and treasures. The port of Kirra on the Gulf of Iteas was the main access point to Delphi for pilgrims and travelers wishing to visit the Pythia.¹²³ The connections between Delphi and the port at Kirra, as well as to the Boeotian plain, stand as two of the strongest and most prominent. The overland route demonstrates the power of pilgrimage to reorganize and reroute roads and paths, as the cities and villages of Phokis and Ozolian Lokris no doubt benefited from Delphi's increasing presence. Rather than bypassing the region, pilgrimage convoys likely drew in traders from the Boeotian and Thessalian plains, increasing traffic to the region and creating new routes of communication and trade.¹²⁴

Hosios Loukas and his successors were very much aware of Delphi's vast role in the region's past. Thus, when the abbots and monks of Hosios Loukas chose how their monastery was to relate to the topography and its other inhabitants, they could not do so blindly or in a manner ignorant of the region's past.

121 H. Harissis, "Pindar's *Paean* 8 and the Birth of the Myth of the First Temples of Delphi," *Acta Classica* 62.1 (2019): 78–123.

122 J. Z. de Boer, "Delphi's Small 'Omphalos'; An Enigma," *Syllecta Classica* 18.1 (2007): 81–104, at 81–82.

123 Delphi and Kirra share a complicated history that ended in the First Sacred War, with Kirra being destroyed and then rebuilt by Delphi; see G. Forrest, "The First Sacred War," *BCH* 80.1 (1956): 33–52.

124 Though Delphi declined in sacred importance under Roman rule, it remained an important urban center in Roman and late antique Boeotia; see P. Petridis "Les ateliers de potiers à Delphes à l'époque paléochrétienne," *Topoi* 8.2 (1998): 703–10; and P. Petridis, "Relations between Pottery Workshops in the Greek Mainland during the Byzantine Period," in *Çanak: Late Antique and Medieval Pottery and Tiles in Mediterranean Archaeological Contexts; Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Late Antique, Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman Pottery and Tiles in Archaeological Context* (Çanakkale, 1–3 June 2005), ed. B. Böhlendorf-Arslan, A. O. Uysal, and J. Witte-Orr (Istanbul, 2007), 43–54. In the Middle Byzantine period, a bishop of Delphi was also included on a list of episcopal sees, as recorded in the *Notitiae Episcopatum* (Notitiae 3.719).

The problem, however, was that the Delphic example was not Christian, and moreover, it was the epitome of the region's pagan past. However, this may be more of a problem in the mind of the modern observer than it would have been for the Byzantines. For example, as Anthony Kaldellis states for the use of the Athenian Parthenon as a church in medieval times, "The notions that the Byzantines were not interested in ancient Greece and that they did not look upon Greece in their own time as a classical land are . . . false, certainly when it came to Athens. To the contrary, it was difficult for them to speak of Athens at all without engaging directly with the problem of its classical past and the relation of that past to Christianity; they were *overaware* of the classical past, not blind or indifferent to it."¹²⁵ In Constantinople, one can also see through the writing of the tenth-century poet Constantine of Rhodes the vividness with which the Byzantines saw the classical world and their ability to tie it to a thoroughly Christian landscape. He describes the Church of the Holy Apostles as one of the wonders of the city and, in doing so, invokes all manner of classical mythology, including muses, gorgons, and ancient gods.¹²⁶

Therefore, Hosios Loukas did not have to rewrite or remove classical myths or ancient heroes from the landscape; it was rather the opposite—they had to promote new relationships with the landscape that placed the monastery at the center of a distinctly monastic landscape that shared in and built upon a collective memory of the region and its history and is exemplified by the following passage:

As he [the strategos Pothos] was thus divided and was torn by two emotions, yearning and fear, an official drew near and mentioned the divine Luke, saying, "If you talk with him and inform him about the matters at hand, you will no longer be in doubt about what you should do, and you will know precisely what is desirable." Hearing this the general did not delay or hesitate but made it his first order of business to go to see the holy one, and on meeting him he did not hear oblique and ambiguous words as

125 Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon*, 5.

126 For text and translation, see L. James, ed., *Constantine of Rhodes, on Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles* (Farnham, 2012).

in the Pythian oracles, but what was beneficial, clearly and unambiguously expressed.¹²⁷

In the above passage, the author of Loukas's vita relates that a strategos (general) named Pothos was seeking solace after the death of his son. The strategos is told by an official, possibly someone of local origin, that he should seek out Loukas's help. The general went to Loukas and was greeted with advice that was "beneficial, clearly and unambiguously expressed." The final statement of unambiguous advice is interesting, as it is cast in contrast to the "ambiguous words . . . in the Pythian oracles," a clear reference to nearby Delphi. The use of the Pythian oracle as Loukas's foil becomes more apparent when we connect the lines of evidence previously mentioned. For one, Loukas's fame initially came from his role as a prophetic leader.¹²⁸ His prediction that Crete would return to Byzantine dominion gained the saint (posthumously) many followers and patrons, with one such person being another strategos, Krenites, who was the likely patron of Hosios Loukas's first katholikon dedicated to Agia Varvara.¹²⁹ Hosios Loukas and the later leaders of his eponymous community thus invoked a shared memory of ancient Delphi to establish itself as a new oracular center. This invocation fits within already established relationships with the topography (e.g., the sacred mountains, springs, fields, etc.) that contributes to an oracular landscape and other social groups (e.g., local communities and imperial society that also participated in creating a communal memory of the region). This shared memory, however, needed modification within the social structures of a Christianized world. Therefore, the Delphic oracles were not forgotten, though the region's shared memory of such prophetic actions required the Christian correction of a saintly Loukas. The remembrance of oracular activity was thus no longer to end with Apollo and Delphic tradition but to continue through Loukas and the true God.

This Christian addition to a collective memory of oracular activity can also be applied to Loukas's role as a holy healer. That late antique saints assumed roles formerly attributed to ancient gods has been addressed

elsewhere, but here it is germane to highlight the connection between Apollo and Loukas briefly.¹³⁰ Apollo had many roles in the ancient world, with one being his role as the god of healing. At Delphi, worshipping Apollo as a source of healing is reflected in several inscriptions. Devotees would travel to the temple to be healed by the god and the present medical attendants. The practice was supported by an exceptional tax called the *ἰατρικόν*.¹³¹ The comparisons to Hosios Loukas can be made on several fronts. First, Loukas the saint is a parallel figure to Apollo the healer. Though widely known for his oracular powers, the saint was also well-known as a healer. Pilgrims would travel from far and wide to visit the monastery, spending time in the katholikon, near the saint's relics, or in other sanctified places to invoke the saint's heavenly powers of healing. Moreover, the monks also served the role of medical attendants. Although we have no direct evidence of a hospital or medical care at Hosios Loukas, the presence of such a practice is likely, given its frequent documentation at other monasteries throughout the Middle Byzantine period.¹³²

The annexation of Apollo's healing prowess by Loukas is further evidenced by the saint's feast day. Carolyn L. Connor and Robert Connor note the connection between Apollo's birthday and Loukas's feast day in their translation of the saint's life: "The oracle [at Delphi] could only be consulted one day a year, on the seventh of the Delphic month Busios, which approximately corresponds to the month of February. Luke died on 7 February, and this became the day of his festival."¹³³ Such an overt connection can only be explained by the desire to recode a shared memory of Apollo and shift it toward a new communal memory based on the life of Hosios Loukas. However, this emphasis

127 *v. H. L.* 58 (trans. C. C., 93).

128 *v. H. L.* 54 (trans. C. C., 87).

129 *v. H. L.* 59 (trans. C. C., 95–101); Oikonomides, "The First Century," 254; and Bouras, *Architecture*, 13.

130 Saints played multiple roles in society that changed over time. They were hinge-men between God and the lay elite, clairvoyants, and political figures. For the changing role of saints, see Brown, "Rise and Function"; P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century," in Hackel, *The Byzantine Saint*, 51–66; and Morris, "Political Saint."

131 Evidence of the tax is known from inscriptions found at Delphi and published in J. H. Middleton, "The Temple of Apollo at Delphi," *JHS* 9 (1888): 282–322, at 320.

132 T. S. Miller, "Byzantine Hospitals," *DOP* 38 (1984): 53–63.

133 Connor and Connor, *Life and Miracles*, 168; see also H. W. Parke, "The Days for Consulting the Delphic Oracle," *CQ* 37.1–2 (1943): 19–22.

should not be mistaken for a strict cultural continuity between Delphi and Hosios Loukas, but instead is representative of the “creative aspects and historical dimension of the cultural tension between Hellenism and Christianity,” as Kaldellis notes for Byzantine Athenians.¹³⁴ It is, in addition, a further example of the need of social groups to celebrate aspects of their communal memory “in a conscious and ideology-driven” manner.¹³⁵ Thus, Hosios Loukas’s feast day of 7 February, also the birthday of Apollo, is yet another example of the survival of an ancient festival being repackaged and repurposed to fit new relationships between humans, topography, and the divine.

Finally, the connection between memory, movement, and landscape becomes sharper when one considers that the pilgrim’s approach to Hosios Loukas also drew from a shared pattern of mobility that took inspiration from Delphi’s relationship with the mountainous and coastal environments of Hellas. The relationship between Delphi and the port of Kirra reveals a pattern of mobility that had a lasting impression on Phokis, Ozolian Lokris, and Boeotia. In such a configuration, the port became an essential extension of the pilgrimage center itself; the latter had such a reliance on the former that conflict between the two touched off the First Sacred War.¹³⁶ Thus, I propose that Hosios Loukas’s relentless ambition to be a “coastal” monastery stems, at least in part, from a pattern of mobility and movement with Delphic origins, a pattern that would be also redeveloped with other late antique and Christianized models in mind. Though Byzantine monasteries generally had an interest in the sea to facilitate the movement of their monks and take goods to trade, and in the absence of written documents, it appears likely that Hosios Loukas utilized its seaborne connections with pilgrimage specifically in mind.¹³⁷

134 Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon*, xii.

135 F. Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East: From the Early Empire to the Middle Byzantine Era* (Cambridge, 2015), 4.

136 See above, n. 123. Additionally, Kirran lands were transferred to Delphi and subsequently dedicated to Apollo, which forbade their cultivation or use as grazing pastures; see T. Howe, “Pastoralism, the Delphic Amphiktyony and the First Sacred War: The Creation of Apollo’s Sacred Pastures,” *Historia* 52 (2003): 129–46. The port thereafter remained active; see Polybius, *The Histories* 5.27 (trans. W. R. Paton [Cambridge, 2011], 74–75).

137 For Middle Byzantine monastic fleets and trade, see Smyrlis, *La fortune des grands monastères*, 101–2; and M. Kaplan, “Monks

Hosios Loukas did not create a monastic landscape conducive to pilgrimage within a topography untouched by the practice. Such power to reshape a landscape was already exerted by another sacred landscape only a short distance away, the nearby oracular center of Delphi during the classical period of central Greece’s history. It needs to be emphasized, however, that the similarities between Hosios Loukas and Delphi do not suggest that Loukas the saint or the later monastic community had in mind to imitate the classical site directly. Instead, I propose the monks were conscious of the region’s past and saw in Delphi a successful model of pilgrimage and wealth, likely one of several models along with other late antique and Byzantine monastic examples. With the Delphic connection in mind, pilgrimage and its contribution to Hosios Loukas’s monastic landscape demonstrate the complexity and multifaceted nature of human and nonhuman relationships upholding the monastic landscape.

Conclusion

The modern journey to Hosios Loukas has no doubt changed our perception of the monastery, with the introduction of paved roads and automobile traffic, as well as the development of Arachova as an upscale ski resort.¹³⁸ This modern view is enormously different from that of the average eleventh-century Byzantine, who could not arrive by taxi for €50 return. I would argue that this A-to-B journey has also penetrated the

and Trade in Byzantium from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century,” in *Trade in Byzantium: Papers from the Third International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium*, ed. P. Magdalino and N. Necipoğlu (Istanbul, 2016), 55–64.

138 For example, see the entry for Hosios Loukas in the popular travel guide Lonely Planet (“Moni Osios Loukas,” <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/greece/delphi-sterea-ellada/attractions/moni-osios-loukas/a/poi-sig/506504/1316611>): “Dedicated to a 10th-century hermit canonised for his healing and prophetic powers, its principal church, Agios Loukas, is a glorious symphony of marble and mosaics, with icons by Michael Damaskinos, the 16th-century Cretan painter. Opaque marble screens create striking contrasts of light and shade, while fine frescoes adorn the crypt where Loukas lies entombed. The monks’ former living quarters hold historical displays, while a shop adjoining the spacious scenic terrace outside sells simple snacks. Modest dress is required (no shorts). To get here from Delphi, you’ll need your own transport or a taxi. Taxis from Delphi cost €50 return (20 minutes each way); they’re €20 return from Distomo or €30 from Livadia. Taxis will normally wait one hour; arrange the price before you set off.”

collective study of Byzantine monuments, particularly monastic sites. The Byzantine viewer was enmeshed in a landscape of miracles, hidden reveals, stories, and monuments that contributed to their understanding of the monastic landscape. When one considers this as a possibility, the monastery expands far beyond the fine frescoes and glittering mosaics of master artisans.

This article has sought to present a novel view of Byzantine monasticism by establishing the Byzantine monastery as something that fundamentally extended beyond the *katholikon*. As was asserted above, the monastery is not just a building; it is also the landscape. Additionally, this article is the first attempt to establish in detail the monastic landscape of Hosios Loukas, one of the most important monuments of Middle Byzantine art and architecture. The intention is for this view of Hosios Loukas to work in tandem with the vast literature concerning the monastery to aid in creating a more holistic view of the monastery's activities and influence within Hellas and in broader Byzantine society.

Revisiting the objectives laid out at the start of this article, the evidence is clear that the modern academic view of the monastery needs expansion; in particular, our views of Byzantine monasticism are frequently confined to the walls of the *katholikon*—but these walls were, in fact, porous. Monasteries as social institutions were dynamic communities, often creating, interweaving, and maintaining relationships with various human and nonhuman actors. It is thus worthwhile to reemphasize four conclusions from this study of Hosios Loukas's monastic landscape.

First, the landscape of Hosios Loukas was inherently multifunctional. Three of the most prominent agentive forces explored above are mountains, fields, and sea. The relations with these varying topographies took on overlapping forms, with mountains seen as both sacred locations and high points for visible landmarks and the defense of monastic territories; fields were the heartbeat of monastic wealth while also being the stage for much of the monastery's interaction with the lay population; and lastly, coastlines were essential to a monastery's economic growth, but they came with dangers that required both sacred intervention and protection. Moreover, these different topographies also brought the monastery into contact with other social groups. Natural harbors and travel networks attracted salable goods and lay traders—the same locations where chief markets were often located (e.g., Thebes

and Chalkida). Meanwhile, fields needed labor that was often attracted from nearby villages, and grand building works needed the patronage of local elites to foot the bill for their extravagant proposals.

The second preliminary conclusion concerns Hosios Loukas's utilization of various human and non-human relationships to define and promote its distinct identity. In particular, Hosios Loukas's use of the built environment marked specific locations on the landscape where the monastic community tied its own thread to these relationships, thereby redefining the landscape in its own image. The *katholikon*, for example, did not make Mount Helicon a holy mountain; instead, it made it a holy mountain dedicated to Hosios Loukas. *Metochia*, towers, chapels, and other monastic buildings sanctified locations, rerouted movement toward the monastery, increased economic activity in a given place, and provided security for goods and people in case of attack, all while under the shield of Loukas's sacred protection and his prowess as a holy healer.

Third, it can be said with certainty that Hosios Loukas's built environment extended beyond the *katholikon* and the core monastic complex. Instead, the built environment was a pliable entity that extended across Byzantine Hellas. The *katholikon* and the core complex have rightly garnered the most academic attention in this regard. However, *metochia*, chapels, towers, agricultural installations, roads, paths, and harbors all played a role in defining the extent of the monastery's built environment, expanding its religious clout, and increasing its chances for survival in a competitive monastic world. The broad range of buildings and their functions are representative of the infinitely dense tapestry of human relationships underpinning the built environment. Therefore, to speak of Hosios Loukas's built environment is to speak of its monastic landscape, as the two are inseparable and extend far beyond the *katholikon* of the monastery.

And fourth, with an expanded view of the monastery it becomes abundantly clear that Hosios Loukas's connection to the sea has been vastly underemphasized and understudied. The sea was essential to the saint's life and the monastery's continued existence and growth after Loukas's death. *Metochia* were founded to access and claim nearby coastal bays at Antikyra and Thisve. Furthermore, the sea was also a sacred element at the core of Hosios Loukas's identity. It was by the sea that Loukas spent a significant portion of his life, and it was

by sea-lanes that an abundant number of pilgrims would have visited the monastery. The evidence above points to the fact that the monastery simultaneously moved to secure its connection to the sea and establish itself as an influential center of monastic activity. Paul Magdalino once stated that “Constantinople . . . is a city not only by the sea, but also, to a large extent, in the sea.”¹³⁹ In the same vein, the evidence given herein demonstrates that Hosios Loukas, too, is a monastery not only by the sea, but also in the sea.

As a final point, the connections drawn in this study of Hosios Loukas’s monastic landscape set

up further comparative and cross-cultural study of Byzantine monasteries. Furthermore, such a reimagined view of the Byzantine monastery necessitates looking beyond the grand art and architecture of the *katholikon* and thinking deeper about the monastery as a social institution that was inalienable from its sociocultural context. To further our understanding of Byzantine monasticism, it is essential to draw broader cross-cultural comparisons, bringing the field into dialogue with scholars of monasticism, religious landscapes, and social institutions from outside the empire.

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139 P. Magdalino, “The Maritime Neighborhoods of Constantinople: Commercial and Residential Functions, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries,” *DOP* 54 (2000): 209–26, at 209.

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